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OR,

TRAPPING FOR HUMAN GAME.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH,
AUTHOR OF "FELIX FOX," "TEXAS TRUMP,"
"PHIL FLASH," "BOY SHADOW," "EX-
CELSIOR SPORT," "DODGER DICK,"
"SINGLE SIGHT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER FINDS AN OWNER.

On the afternoon of a breezy autumn day, two stout, good-looking boys, about seventeen, were seated in the second-story front room of a very modest house on the Bowery.

Both had more than a local reputation, for they constituted the youngest detectives in the United States. This firm—Fox & Falcon, it

"GREAT HEAVENS!" EXCLAIMED FELIX FOX, GLANCING AT THE TELEGRAM WHICH QUIVERED IN HIS CLUTCH. "LISTEN AT THIS, FALCON!"

was called—was favorably known to the New York police bureau, and there were men behind the bars of Sing Sing who heartily hated the two young partners.

Felix Fox—a name which the reader has doubtless met before, for our pen has already chronicled some of his adventures—was the head of the house, and his companion was Florus Falcon, a youth admirably fitted for the business in which the twain had embarked.

"For once we have nothing on our hands!" exclaimed Felix. "If nothing transpires soon, I shall look for a job along the docks. Ha! the carrier is at the door below! Nothing for us, of course!"

A moment later some one was heard coming up-stairs, and in a little while a man in the uniform of a letter-carrier stood before the boys.

"Is that for either of you?" he asked, extending a letter well postmarked and covered with memoranda peculiar to the Post-office Department. "We are very anxious to get it off our hands," he added. "That letter has bothered us for three weeks."

"It is addressed to Phineas Fox," answered Felix, who had taken the letter.

"That is very plain," replied the carrier. "We can find no Phineas Fox in New York."

"Its first postmark is that of Philadelphia," continued the young Gotham detective. "It was directed to No. —, Bowery. Why, I lived there a year ago."

"Ah! that is a little light on the puzzle!" exclaimed the carrier. "I rather think the letter belongs to you. You can open it and glance at its contents. If it is not for you, we can in-dorse it 'opened by mistake,' and its next journey will be to the Dead Letter Office."

"I'll do that," was Felix's reply, and the next minute he had opened the envelope and relieved it of its contents, a single sheet of paper.

"It is for me!" he exclaimed, starting slightly as he spoke. "I remember having met the writer nearly a year ago in the Quaker City."

"You have my thanks," laughed the carrier. "If we had thought of you in the first place, the letter would have been delivered long ago. I hope, however, that the delay has caused no inconvenience?" And the man, well pleased at having got rid of the epistolary Jonah, went down-stairs with a happy carrier's agility.

Meanwhile, the two boys, there were no secrets in the house of Fox & Falcon, were bending over the letter which, written in a somewhat cramped hand, ran as follows:

"PHILADELPHIA, PA., Oct. 4, 188—.

"MR. PHINEAS FOX:—

"Some time ago when you were at my store with Mr. Kirby, the detective, you told me to let you know if I ever needed the services of a detective in New York. I say in sorrow now that I am obliged to call on you. On the first day of the month my son Clarence left home without warning. You saw him when you were here, and I believe talked with him. Yesterday I found accidentally in his room a letter written to him by some one in New York. This letter I believe to be the decoy that took him from home. It seems to have been dated at No. —, Mott street (a bad quarter of New York, they tell me), and is signed 'Morgan,' as if Clarence was already familiar with the writer. I wish you would take charge of the matter and see what has become of my boy, my only child, as you may know. He never went away before, and the letter which I have mentioned fills me with fears. Mr. Kirby, who is dead now, told me that you were bright in your profession, and I come to you with high hopes. Don't make the search a half one; don't spare expense, but draw on me, and do your duty. I think you told me that your name was Phineas Fox, but I address this letter to your house, the number of which I distinctly remember. Now go ahead and may success crown your hunt.

"I am very truly yours,

"TRUMAN LACEY.

"No. —, Eighth street, near Market."

"I remember Mr. Lacey very well," exclaimed Felix, when the end of the letter had been reached. "Mr. Kirby and I dropped in on him one day when I was in Philadelphia. I recollect seeing his son, too, a good-looking, bright boy of sixteen. But, look here, Florus; this letter was written nearly a month ago! Truman Lacey may not need our services now, and Clarence, missing then, may be at home to-day."

"That is true. A telegram to Mr. Lacey will settle it all. I think it is worth inquiring into."

"An inquiry shall be made. As the Philadelphia merchant did not hear from me because he advertised me as Phineas Fox, a mistake of his own, he may have put the case into other hands. If Clarence Lacey was decoyed to number — Mott street, he was to be the victim of some deep game. That is the same house sometimes inhabited by the gutter snipe, Tommy Todd."

"The same house!" cried Florus Falcon. "We can telegraph and get a reply from Mr. Lacey before we take any further steps."

Five minutes later Felix Fox entered one of the offices of the Union Telegraph Company, and sent a telegram to Truman Lacey, inquiring if the missing boy had returned.

Then he went back to his comrade and the two waited for the message boy.

They did not have to wait long, for, before the hour closed, a boy bounded nimbly up the steps with the return message.

"Great heavens!" returned Felix Fox, glancing at the telegram which quivered in his clutch. "Listen at this, Falcon!"

And then he read the body of the startling dispatch:

"TO FELIX FOX:—

"Mr. Truman Lacey fell dead in his store on 8th St., Oct. 5th. His son Clarence, who went away on the 1st, has never been heard of since."

"Box & Blair,

"Successors to Truman Lacey."

For several seconds the two youths looked at each other too astonished to utter even an exclamation. The startling telegram had taken their breath.

Truman Lacey dead and his son still missing!

Felix Fox was the first to speak.

"We now know why Lacey never followed my letter with a second. He fell dead the day after it was written, and in all probability the son knows nothing about the terrible event. We've got a case at last, Falcon, that possesses the elements of mystery. I shall go to Philadelphia to-night to begin at the beginning, and you will look up matters and things in Mott street. I consider the case as one intrusted to us by the dead. Our duty is to find Clarence Lacey, to restore him to the darkened home. It will be no easy trial, for the signature to the letter which decoyed the young Philadelphian from home strangely impresses me. We shall be met, I have no doubt, by the fox-like cunning of the redoubtable Tommy Todd, if he is mixed up in the matter—as I now think is quite probable, but this time I intend to make sure work of the little marplot if he is working this racket on the lost boy."

"Tommy is a giant!" laughed Falcon.

"I know that—a giant in a dwarf's clothes. Nothing happens on his heath unknown to him and if Clarence Lacey was decoyed to No. — Mott street, as his father thought, we shall certainly encounter Tommy Todd somewhere along the line."

A very brief twilight was settling over New York when Felix Fox crossed the ferry to take the train for Philadelphia.

The young ferret believed that he was at the starting of a very exciting chase, and while the boat plowed the waters he attempted to fix Clarence Lacey in his mind.

If the youth had been decoyed from home, it was for a purpose. What that purpose was, was to be found out, and that by shrewd work, and through devious ways.

Felix had taken the boat which would land him at the depot in time to catch the train a minute before its time for departure.

Already the waiting-rooms were in a blaze of electric light, but the Bowery ferret hurried through the gate and climbed up the steps.

"Now for the Quaker City!" and Felix dropped into a seat, feeling that his quest had commenced.

Just then he glanced out of the window in time to see a figure dodge and disappear.

"Aha! Tommy Todd!" cried the boy, springing down the aisle. "Is it true, my young rascal, that you've got your eyes on me at the outset?"

He was out on the platform in an instant, and his eyes were on the alert, but the figure he had sighted and recognized was not to be seen now. Felix drew back and waited, but was not rewarded.

Presently the conductor's "All aboard!" rung under the arched roof, and the long train started. It was just quitting the depot when a figure swung itself up on the steps at Felix's feet.

The young detective leaned quickly forward.

"Good-night, Tommy!" he exclaimed.

There was a look and a cry, and the next second Tommy Todd fell backward to the ground and disappeared.

"He is under the wheels!" cried Felix, but why look?

The train was speeding away.

CHAPTER II.

"JULIUS."

"WHEW! that's what I call a shave!" rose from the lips of the boy who scrambled to his

feet, and looked after the receding train. "I'd like to know what takes Felix Fox away just at this time, and I was going to find out when his voice knocked me over, and nearly dumped me under the wheels! I think I'd better go back, for I can't catch the Philadelphia Express no way I can fix it."

Tommy Todd went back to the spot where he had landed on his back and picked up his hat.

"I'll get even with you, Felix! You don't expect that Tommy Todd will forget this, I hope."

The boy mingled with the passengers of a train just arrived and went on board the ferry.

Tommy Todd was a wirily built boy with a shock of flaxen hair and a pair of mischievous eyes that saw everything. His clothes were none too good and did not fit him to a fault. About them clung the odor of bad cigarettes, for Tommy was an inveterate smoker, and his praise of a certain brand among his associates secured him smokes for nothing. If the victims had known this, Tommy would have been boycotted with a gamin's vengeance.

Shrewd, conscienceless and full of tricks learned in the worst quarters of New York, the king of gamins was a bad foe, and a slippery friend. On several occasions the firm of Fox & Falcon had seen his fine hand in their failures, but they had not succeeded in entrapping Tommy, as they desired.

Despite his failure to follow Felix to Philadelphia, Tommy kept up a show of jollity while crossing the ferry. He went forward and whistled the chorus of a prevailing opera as he planned how to get square with the young detective.

Among the persons who had arrived on the last train was a youngish man with keen black eyes and a dark mustache, slightly waxed at the ends. He was dressed in clothes of the latest style, and carried an umbrella with an ivory handle.

From his station against the ladies' cabin he watched Tommy closely, and now and then a smile appeared under the mustache.

"Mr. Todd is in good humor one would think; but I can see that he is nettled and in a brown study," murmured the man. "He came over to Jersey for a purpose which did not pan out to his satisfaction, and he would have the people believe that he is in his happiest mood. I guess I know you, Tommy Todd."

By this time the boat was approaching the Cortlandt street crib, and Tommy was making preparations to be the first to quit her when he felt something tap one of his legs.

Turning half-way around with well assumed carelessness, the boy encountered the eyes of the well-dressed man.

A look of recognition passed between them, and Tommy checked his desire to be the first on the bridge, and left the boat with the stranger.

"I wasn't looking for you. I should say not," confessed the gamin king, addressing the man at the first opportunity.

"Well, I've turned up, Tommy," was the answer, accompanied by a smile of self-importance. "What took you across the river to-night?"

"Mebbe I might ask what fetched you back?" grinned Tommy.

"I came back on business."

"And on business I went over to Jersey," was the answer.

"Oh, you're a slick one, Tommy Todd!" averred the man.

"Not as slick as I might be, Julius. I think you should have remained in Philadelphia."

"When everything's serene there and I have business in Gotham? I don't see why, Mr. Toddy."

"You'd know why if you were in the Broad street depot when the Philadelphia Express gets in!" retorted the gamin, drawing slightly back and looking the man in the face. "I came with-in an ace of going to the Quaker City on that very train."

The man looked astonished.

"What was going to take you to Philadelphia?" he demanded.

"I was going to take a ride with Felix Fox."

If any one had been watching the pair, he would have seen Julius start at Tommy's announcement, a start which told that the name of the young ferret was not unknown to him.

"What takes Felix over at this time?" he asked.

"That is just what I was going to find out."

"It can't be—"

Julius lowered his voice and then broke his sentence himself.

"There's no telling what those two Bowery ferrets haven't found out," assumed Tommy. "Florus Falcon is about as shrewd as Felix

Fox, though I'm the diamond that cuts them oftenest!"

"I know that they know nothing!" protested the black-eyed man. "Why, Tommy, the whole affair is forgotten, and there's not a single clew for the sharpest detective in the two cities to work on."

"That may be so," observed the gamin. "And I hope you're correct, Julius; but I've always said, you know, that we have to keep a sharp lookout for Fox & Falcon, the Bowery pair."

"Let him go to Philadelphia," answered Julius, as he lit a cigar which he took from an elegant case as Tommy produced one of his favorite cigarettes. "He must be going on another case. How's everything at the old number, Tommy?"

"In ship-shape, I guess. Aren't you going up to-night?"

"After a while."

"Oh, you're bound for the hotel, now?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll bid you a fond adieu, Julius, with the hope that I'll see you later," and Tommy Todd waved a graceful parting to the man whom he left on the sidewalk at the entrance to the ferry.

Tommy disappeared with the street Arab's usual alacrity, and Julius walked toward the Elevated station.

He suddenly broke into a laugh which several pedestrians heard; they looked strangely at him, wondering at the singular spectacle of a man laughing aloud to himself.

"Tommy's fright is all for nothing!" chuckled Julius. "I guess I am not going to come back to New York at this time if anything was wrong at the other end of the line. No, not much!" and he sprang up the steps of the "L" depot, and was whisked away by the first train that came along.

Half an hour later Tommy Todd entered a four-story house on Mott street and proceeded to the third floor where he walked into a room occupied by a girl of his own age.

"Back once more, Nan!" saluted Tommy, dropping into a chair in front of the girl, who was mending a garment at a small work-table.

Their eyes met.

"Where have you been?" demanded the girl. "There is dirt on your shoulders, and your hat—well, just look at it!"

In an instant Tommy recalled his tumble from the steps of the train in Jersey City, and a smile wreathed his lips as he took off his hat and surveyed its condition.

"I've had a haccident," he laughingly confessed.

"And you'll have your last one some of these times," was the reply, whereat Tommy laughed again.

The girl's face did not show any signs of merriment. It was a pale face, but well shaped and handsome, a striking contrast to the features of Master Todd framed in flaxen hair.

"Nan! Nan! look up here!" suddenly continued Tommy. "You ought to be in good spirits to-night. Ah! you would if you only knew who's come."

The girl stopped her work and looked up with an inquisitive face.

"Who is here?" she asked.

"Ah! can't you guess?"

"Not Julius?"

"Nobody else!" asserted Tommy. "He'll show up presently and then you'll be all smiles."

There was no reply; the girl's eyes went back to her work, but after several stitches she gathered it up and put it away in a small wardrobe at one side of the room.

Tommy watched her out of the corners of his eyes.

"Tommy Todd," she said suddenly, coming up to him, "will you go to Julius?"

"I!—when?"

"Now! Tell him that I don't want to see him any more."

Master Todd recoiled with a singular cry.

"Are you crazy, Nan?" he exclaimed. "Not want to see Julius any more? Why, girl, you can't afford to do that. You—"

"I mean every word! Won't you tell him, Tommy Todd?"

"No, Nan."

The girl sat down at the table and buried her face in her hands.

"I don't want to take the step I will take if Julius comes," she cried.

Tommy leaned forward and touched her arm.

"Nan, you can't quit the game now. It's a little too late to turn saint," he whispered. "Besides, just now is when we can't afford to fall out."

The girl jerked away, and sprang to her feet.

"Do as you please!" she exclaimed, confronting Tommy Todd with a face suddenly flushed. "Tell Julius or not, as you wish, but I don't keep the compact another night. I am going to be somebody once more!"

"Not just yet, girl!" And the gamin caught her wrist in a vise-like grip.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST LINK.

"WHAT do you mean?" cried the girl, trying to break from the boy's grip.

"We don't want any extras just now," was the answer, and then he leaned toward Nan and continued: "Why, Nan, we are just where the riches begin. Julius has got some news; I know he has—"

"Oh, I hate Julius!" broke in Nan. "I don't want to see him to-night, nor any more. Let me go, Tommy!"

"Will you behave? Will you promise not to go away?" asked the boy eagerly.

"Yes, yes."

Tommy released the grip on Nan's wrist and the girl went to the table on which she buried her face between her arms.

"I guess she's cooling down," observed Tommy to himself, and the next moment he picked up his hat and stole from the room.

The house in Mott street was occupied by many people and some were always under the eye of the police. In the basement was a Chinese laundry, the first floor was a junk-shop, and above it lived a motley population.

A few of its tenants were good, well-meaning people, for nothing is often altogether bad; but the good ones attended strictly to their own affairs, and did not molest their neighbors.

Tommy Todd knew all from garret to basement, but with some, the better class, he was not on intimate terms.

When he left Nan he went down to the second floor, and entered a certain room without knocking.

"Hilloa, Tommy, me b'ye!" rung out a voice in rich Celtic. "An' where have yez been so long that my eyes haven't been blissed wid a sight ov ye?"

The speaker was a giantess in dirty calico. She was by no means handsome, but her strength was prodigious, and whenever the police had occasion to visit the house they were always on the look out for Mrs. Fitzgerald, or 'Mother Fitz,' as she was called.

Tommy Todd slid forward, fearing from Mother Fitz's demonstrations, that she intended to embrace him.

"You haven't brought the sunlight av yer smoilin' face here for three days," continued the woman. "What is the outer world doin' jes' now, me b'ye?"

Tommy shook his head.

"The outer world be banged, Mother Fitz," he retorted. "I'm looking after the Mott street kingdom just now."

"Oh, ye's after the shoinin' seraph of the third floor!" laughed the woman. "Well, I think ye'd better, Tommy Todd."

"What is up?" asked the boy catching the emphasis thrown out by Mother Fitz.

"She'll take wings an' leave yez one o' these foine days."

"What makes you think so?"

"She's told me so."

Tommy almost fell back.

"What did she say, Mother Fitz?" he asked with eagerness.

"She's got tired of the kingdom," and then the woman added in a confidential tone: "Tommy, yez know that Nan's got no Mott street blood in her blissed veins."

"What if she hasn't?" and the gamin suddenly flushed. "She is going to stay right where she is."

"I hope ye may kape her, but she's loikely to try her wings."

"What's got into the girl?"

"The blissid Virgin only knows, Mister Todd!" ejaculated Mother Fitz. "Not long ago Nan seemed continted wid her lot, but now she's onaisy."

"I'm afraid she'll go to-night," and Tommy touched the woman's arm. "She's just promised me that she would not, but she's all tore up and don't more'n half know what she's saying. Mother Fitz, can't I get you to go up and stay with her a little while, say, an hour or so?"

"For your sake, Tommy, I'll do any thing," was the answer.

"Let her have her own way in everything but going out," continued Tommy. "I'll be back in an hour, I think. If she wants to go to sleep let her, then you can slip out and lock the door."

Mother Fitz promised to do all this, and Tommy Todd hurried down-stairs to the street.

"I've got to post Julius right away," he decided. "He wants to know just how things are before he shows up. I've an idea what ails Nan, and I can't say that I blame her very much, for many a woman is chicken-hearted. There's a good deal of it about Mother Fitz, but not when the cops are about. Well, I should say not," and the boy laughed at some recollections of the woman's Amazonian exploits.

No sooner had Tommy disappeared from the immediate vicinity of the building, than a figure glided in at the front entrance and was lost to view in the dim hallway always open day and night.

This visitor was a youth commonly dressed and quick of movement.

He mounted the steps to the second floor and walked down a corridor past Nan's room.

If he had been a little quicker, he might have encountered the colossal figure of Mother Fitz, who, true to her promise to Tommy Todd, had gone to the girl.

The boy paused at a door where the corridor was darkest, and rapped softly. In a moment a bolt was withdrawn and he stepped into a room occupied by a bed, a table and an old shoemaker's bench.

The person who had admitted the boy was a man past sixty. He wore glasses, and the apron in front of him told that he had been caught at work.

"You haven't been here for a long time," said the man who recognized his visitor who was Florus Falcon, Felix Fox's partner.

"Nothing happened to call me here, Malachi," was the reply.

"Are you sure nothing has happened?" asked the cobbler, lowering his voice.

"No. I take it all back," smiled Florus. "Something has happened, and that's why I'm here to-night."

"I thought so. What is it?"

Old Malachi had gone back to his bench, but instead of resuming the job on hand, he looked anxiously at the Bowery shadow.

"Nearly a month ago—on the first, to be precise—a boy left his home in Philadelphia. He ran away. After he was gone several days it was discovered that he had received a letter from some one in this house. That letter bore the signature of 'Morgan,' nothing more. What do you know, Malachi?"

A strange smile came to the cobbler's face.

"Is that all you know?" he asked.

"It is all we know at present. We may know more when Felix returns from the Quaker City for which place he left to-night."

Then Florus Falcon proceeded and gave an account of the letter which at last found an owner and its contents.

Malachi the cobbler listened intently, and near the end of the narrative the young detective saw his face brighten.

"Well, I can tell you this, Florus," he exclaimed. "Clarence Lacey came to the house."

Despite his cool head, the young spotter could hardly keep back a cry.

"Are you sure of this?" he asked.

"I am."

"What did you see?"

"I saw the Philadelphia boy himself."

"This is the first link," exclaimed Falcon. "Go on, Malachi."

"He came here about ten o'clock on the night of the first," continued the cobbler. "I happened to be out about that hour, and when I came back I saw Tommy Todd and a strange well-dressed boy on the stair."

"So Tommy's hand is in the game; but this is nothing strange," the Falcon thought.

"I did not think much of the affair at the moment," the cobbler went on. "Tommy Todd is everywhere, and picks up some singular acquaintances. The two went to Tommy's room, the last one on the second floor back, and I saw them no more that night. The next day and the next the strange boy was in Tommy's company; but all at once he disappeared. I haven't seen him since the third night. From your description he must have been Clarence Lacey. The girl in the room below me—Nan, they call her—saw him, too, for I have heard her talking about him to Tommy Todd."

"Who is Nan?"

"A girl who ought not to inhabit a place like this. She is in the clutches of Tommy Todd, and a fellow who sometimes calls here, a rather dudish-looking young man. I once heard Tommy call him Julius. When I ain't at work I hear a good deal not intended for my ears, Falcon." And the little old cobbler smiled as he mechanically picked up a half-mended shoe.

"That is all you know?" asked the boy shadow.

"It is all, but if I had suspected anything, I might have known more," was the reply.

"It is a beginning, and not a bad one, either," smiled Falcon.

Not long afterward he went down the stair and turned into the street just as a boy stepped upon the sidewalk.

"Jupiter!" exclaimed the last mentioned youth, as his eyes dilated. "I've missed something by not being at home, haven't I?"

It was Tommy Todd!

CHAPTER IV.

FELIX ON THE SCENT.

LET us bridge space and transport the reader to Philadelphia, for it is important that we should keep track of Felix Fox whom we last saw speeding through Jersey City on the Night Express.

Before ten o'clock Felix was let down safely in the Broad street depot.

As he had had no second encounter with Tommy Todd he was inclined to think that he had got rid of that pest who might have given him some trouble if he had followed him to the Quaker City.

The Bowery detective had matured his plans before reaching his destination, and his first visit was to Eighth street where Truman Lacey kept a little notion shop at the time of his death.

He remembered that his friend Mr. Kirby, the Philadelphia detective, had mentioned that Lacey had rooms over the store, and he hoped by going thither to find a starting point toward the solution of the new case.

The telegram received at New York before setting out had told him that Messrs Box & Blair, were Lacey's successors. He knew nothing about them.

When he reached the store he found it closed as he expected, but at one side was an open hallway which terminated at the bottom of a flight of steps.

After a moment's deliberation Felix jerked a brass knob alongside the door and waited.

In a little while a woman's voice from above said, "Walk up-stairs, please," and Felix obeyed.

"Well, what is it?" asked a slender young woman who waited for the boy on the landing above, and as she spoke she looked him over from head to foot.

"I'm looking for information concerning Mr. Truman Lacey who—"

"Oh, he is dead, sir!" ejaculated the girl.

"I am aware of that," smiled Felix. "He lived here I believe."

"He did. The rooms back of me are the ones he occupied with his son Clarence who went off very suddenly."

"Who fell heir to Mr. Lacey's effects?"

The girl leaned forward and looked keenly at Felix for a moment.

"Are you a Lacey?" she asked.

"I am not."

"You don't want to disturb us, do you?"

"No."

"Then step into the house," and the girl walked back to a door and opened it.

Felix was ushered into a small but neat room. A door at one end led into another apartment. It stood open when he entered, but the girl shut it as Felix took a seat.

"We are Laceys," continued the girl, coming back to the young ferret. "We are distant relatives of Mr. Truman Lacey, who dropped dead in his store on the night of the fifth of this month. His son, Clarence, was his only blood relation."

The girl paused, but seeing that Felix was anxious for her to proceed, she immediately resumed:

"It happened that we were obliged to hunt a new house about the time of Mr. Lacey's death, and when we heard of the event through the papers we came down-town and discovered that it was our distant relative, Truman Lacey. By general agreement the goods in the store were put into the hands of Messrs. Box and Blair, who will, when they are well sold, put in a new stock of their own, unless Clarence Lacey turns up. We have nothing to do with the store. Mother and I have rooms here."

"What was done with Mr. Lacey's furniture?"

"His private papers are in his desk in the other room; the furniture we have stored in a clean garret."

"He left no will?"

"No; he went off like that, poor man!" exclaimed the girl, snapping her fingers. "I think

it was trouble over his boy, but we will never know."

"Do you hope Clarence Lacey will turn up?"

"Indeed we do, although we would have to quit this house, perhaps."

The next moment Felix left his chair and walked over to the young girl who called herself Madeleine Lacey.

"I am trying to find Clarence," he continued, looking down into her eyes, which filled with wonderment before he concluded.

"You?" she cried.

"Yes. It is believed that Clarence went to New York, but there is a good deal of mystery about his disappearance."

"I think so," said the girl.

"I would like to see Truman Lacey's private papers, which you say are in your room."

Madeleine was seen to draw back.

"Are you connected with the lawyer who made the same request some time ago?" she asked.

"Aha! then the request has already been made?" asked Felix.

"It was made and granted by mother—not by me," was the answer.

"The man saw the papers?"

"Yes; he went through Mr. Lacey's desk, which is in there."

"What was his plea?"

"He said that Mr. Lacey held some canceled papers belonging to one of his clients."

A smile came unbidden to Felix's lips.

"What was this man like?" he asked.

"He was rather tall, with dark eyes. He had a mustache which he pulled nervously while he talked to us. The ends of it were waxed, I think."

"He wore good clothes, of course?"

"Oh, yes. I was against letting him see the papers, and I said so very plainly, but mother was taken with his slick tongue, and I was overruled. Mother is not at home now; she went to Reading some days ago."

"I am no lawyer," smiled Felix. "You will keep my secret if I say I am a detective, won't you?"

Madeleine Lacey looked at Felix with eyes full of surprise.

"You? Why—"

She was about to finish with, "You're but a boy," but out of respect for Felix's feelings she did not utter her thoughts.

"So you want to find Clarence Lacey, eh?" she cried. "Do you think there ought to be some papers in the desk which can throw some light upon his disappearance?"

"There ought to be unless—"

"Unless somebody took them? I see what you are thinking about! Now, sir, you shall have full swing."

The girl led Felix toward the rear room, in which she turned on the gas. In one corner stood a high, old-fashioned desk of dark mahogany. Somehow or other it reminded Felix of Truman Lacey. Madeleine went toward it with a smile.

"This is it. All his papers are in here," she said, and then taking a bunch of keys from her pocket, she unlocked the desk and threw down the lid, revealing a number of pigeon-holes well-stuffed with papers.

"I leave you here," she went on. "You can remain as long as you wish; the search may be tedious."

"Did the lawyer remain long?"

"Not more than thirty minutes."

"He found his papers, then?"

"I do not know; he seemed to go away disappointed, though he took some papers with him."

A minute later Felix Fox was the sole occupant of the apartment, and he lost no time in getting to work.

"Somebody has been here before me; I can see that!" suddenly ejaculated the young sleuth, before he had proceeded far. "The man who searched this desk was no more a lawyer than I am. He may have been looking for the very document which fetches me here. Well, we will see if his eyes are keener than mine."

Felix went through the pigeon-holes and little drawers systematically. He began at the first. Every envelope was emptied of its contents, and they were thoroughly sifted. The eyes of the Bowery ferret seemed to see everything.

It began to look like a fruitless search.

An hour passed and Felix was still at work. Now and then he could hear the rocking of Madeleine's chair and her voice in some low snatches of song.

The last pigeon-hole was stuffed with envelopes filled with odds and ends of memoranda, old store bills, in fact, memoranda of all sorts.

Felix attacked it with some renewed hope. In one or two instances he had found important clews among just such chaff.

In searching the desk, he had followed the trail of the searcher before him. He could see his tracks all along.

"The 'lawyer' lost hope when he got here," remarked Felix. "See how he has jammed things into this pigeon-hole. He was out of humor," and the boy emptied a mass of papers before him.

All at once his eye caught sight of three letters at the corner of a folded sheet; they were "g-a-n."

The following moment Felix caught up the paper and opened it.

"At last!" he exclaimed. "The lawyer should not have lost hope. I have the prize!" and then bending eagerly forward, he read the letter which had decoyed Clarence Lacey to New York; the fatal letter signed "Morgan."

The boy's eyes got a sudden sparkle of triumph.

Thrusting the paper into an inner pocket, he restored the others to the desk, and, a minute later, threw the keys into Madeleine's lap.

She did not ask if he had been successful. His look told that he had.

CHAPTER V.

A TELLTALE SHEET OF PAPER.

WITH the precious document in his bosom Felix bade Madeleine good-night and left the house.

"This is the first step and I call it a good one," muttered the boy. "Clarence Lacey is nothing to me, but a great wrong has been committed, and I am going to do all in my power to right it."

He had learned from Madeleine that Box & Blair the firm which had succeeded to Truman Lacey's trade were young men whose honesty could not be questioned. As the store had been closed for the night, he could not hope to get a look inside, and after some thought he resolved to go back to New York on the first train.

It happened that he had spent just enough time in his search to miss a train, and he was compelled to wait for one which would not land him in Jersey City before the next morning.

Felix wondered if Florus had made any discoveries about the suspicious house on Mott street. He knew that his young partner was on intimate terms with old Malachi, the cobbler; indeed, Florus had bought the old fellow his bench and the understanding was that the shoemaker was to assist the young detectives whenever he could.

The boy shadow returned to the depot some time before the hour for the departure of the New York Night Express.

It was past midnight, and the elegant waiting-room was not thronged. Here and there drowsy people reclined on the varnished seats, and for a time Felix amused himself with a study of faces as the electric lights revealed them.

Not far away and apparently sound asleep was a man whose feet barely touched the floor.

His face was beardless and full of wrinkles, and the skin was the color of parchment. His clothes were rather new, but his hat was a well-worn slouch, and was tipped back revealing his baldness.

"That is Daddy Drum for a thousand?" mentally cried Felix, after a brief scrutiny of the sleeper. "I wonder what brought him to Philadelphia? I know him to be a cunning little marmot, and slightly acquainted with Tommy Todd."

Felix did not know that the man to all outward appearances sound asleep had stolen into the depot at his heels and had selected his seat unobserved.

"I may have company back to New York," resumed the boy, still looking at Daddy Drum.

The next moment Felix walked into the lunch-room and ordered coffee and a lunch which he was discussing. He had dismissed the little old man in the waiting hall, and seemed to think of nothing but the satisfying of his appetite.

He had barely poured out his coffee ere Daddy Drum opened his eyes and looked toward the lunch-room. Then he got up and skipped nimbly across the floor. The next minute he stood in the little telegraph office, his head barely on a level with the writing-board, and a pencil in his hand.

If Daddy Drum's fingers looked stiff and old, they proved to be nimble, for they quickly wrote out a telegram like this:

"PHILADELPHIA, Oct. —, 188—. To MR. JULIUS JAMES, No. —, MOTT ST. N. Y.:—
"The boy has been to the place and seen the girl. He will reach Jersey City at 6.30. I am on the train."
DARIUS."

Daddy Drum handed the message in, paid for it, and walked out.

There was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes and when he went back to his seat having seen at a glance that Felix was still busy with his lunch he speedily resumed his position, and was again simulating a sound sleeper.

Every now and then, however, the little old fellow would look from the corners of his eyes at the clock which ticked away the time, or would throw a furtive glance toward the tempting lunch-counter at which he could see Felix with his back turned toward him.

When the boy detective came out Daddy Drum was rivaling the seven sleepers, and Felix noticed him with a smile.

"I don't think that is altogether natural," murmured Felix. "I shouldn't wonder, Daddy Drum, if you are playing a game of some kind. It was something very important that drew you from New York. Well, have your snooze out. I am going to tell Florus that the mission to the Quaker City has not been a failure."

As Felix turned toward the telegraph office the eyes of Daddy Drum were upon him, and the old man wished he could look over the boy's shoulder while he wrote a telegram.

All at once Felix stopped. He had just filled the date blank.

"What does this mean?" he mentally ejaculated, lifting the sheet. "Some one has just sent a telegram, a little ahead of me. He bore a bit too hard on the paper, and his pencil has duplicated his words. Ha! what is this? 'To Julius James!' And to the old Mott street trap, too?"

The following moment Felix was deciphering the dispatch which Daddy Drum had sent to New York, and the old fellow out in the waiting room was watching for his reappearance.

"I see through your presence here, Daddy," exclaimed the young spotter. "Well, think that I am in total ignorance of your sly play. The revelation may come when you least expect it."

Then the boy removed the tell-tale blank, and completed his telegram, after which he transferred the spy's duplicated message to his pocket and walked away.

"I feel like going over to the old sharp and startling him with a charge of espionage," he muttered. "If he did not follow me from New York, he was on the lookout for me here. Ah! I begin to see into the game that got Clarence Lacey away from home."

It was now but twenty minutes till the departure of the train Felix was about to take.

The young sleuth passed the time in covertly studying the placid countenance of Daddy Drum. When the voice of the train-caller announced the train for New York, the little old fellow got up and rubbed his eyes like a person shaken from a sound slumber, yawned and stretched himself.

"I hope you've enjoyed that sound sleep, Daddy," laughed Felix, as he watched these make-believe movements by the old man.

The passengers passed through the gate and began to board the cars standing on the track.

All at once a man cried out:
"There are pickpockets about. I have just lost my wallet!"

In a moment there was some confusion and a depot policeman rushed to the spot.

"It was taken at the car-steps," the unlucky individual went on. "I felt the hand of the thief in my pocket. That man yonder was mounting the steps just behind me."

And his finger covered the figure of Daddy Drum, who stood apart from the crowd, with his appearance decidedly against him.

The officer advanced upon the little man.

"I'm no thief!" cried the spy, as the hand of the policeman fell rather heavily on his shoulder. "You can search me. Here I am. What would I take money for?"

The loser of the pocketbook was quite confident that Daddy Drum was nearest him when the theft was committed, and his looks and manner indicated that he believed the little old man to be the thief.

The policeman began to search Daddy Drum at once, and the spectators looked on with breathless interest.

"He's got no stolen property on him now," announced the officer.

"He might have had a confederate near."

"Who can vouch for him?" inquired the policeman, appealing to the crowd.

"I know him!"

At the sound of these words the crowd saw a boy step forward. It was Felix Fox.

Daddy Drum's eyes at once filled with wonder.

"That man is called Daddy Drum, of Number —, Mott street," continued Felix.

"Oh, a Gotham crook, eh?" ejaculated the officer. "I used to be on a beat there, and I know some of the birds of prey of the crooked quarters. I guess we'll hold you." And his grip tightened on Daddy Drum before he could think of flight.

"I think that sets us even," chuckled Felix, as he saw the spy marched off by the policeman. "You can reflect over your little play in a Quaker city station-house. Taken in on suspicion. That'll keep you here awhile, Daddy Drum."

And Felix entered the car, and, with a smile, abandoned the spy to his fate.

In a little while the train pulled out, and was soon cutting the darkness of the night beyond the limits of Philadelphia.

Felix leaned back in his seat for a rest, and speedily forgot the little revenge he had taken on the Mott street spy.

The flying Express makes a quick trip between the two great cities, and through the early morning light the train that bore Felix rolled into the depot at Jersey City.

Waiting for some person at a spot where he would be hard to discover, stood a boy whose eye saw everybody who alighted.

His presence told that Daddy Drum's telegram had reached New York.

CHAPTER VI.

A STREET COLLISION.

"FELIX has come back, but where is Daddy Drum?" ejaculated the boy, who saw the young detective hurrying toward the ferry from the freshly arrived train. "I'm over here to make sure that the old man doesn't lose any time between here and headquarters, but where is he?"

Mr. Tommy Todd's face got a look of disappointment when he saw the last passenger pass, and no Daddy Drum.

Felix had disappeared and Tommy took the Debrosses ferry-boat so as not to meet the young ferret in the passage over.

"Well, where's Daddy?" asked a youngish man who greeted Tommy as he entered a well-furnished room in New York a short time later.

"Didn't come."

"But the telegram said he would."

"Well, he didn't, and that's all there is of it."

"The boy came?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Confound it! what does it mean?"

"I know," cried the gamin king striking the table in front of the young man with his fist.

"Out with it!"

"It means that Felix got the best of Daddy Drum in Philadelphia."

"Do you think so?"

"Why didn't daddy come if it isn't so?"

The young fellow, our acquaintance Julius, made no reply.

"And if something isn't done soon the Bowery pair, will steal a march on us. Don't you see that they've struck the trail by accident? Look at it, Felix goes to Philadelphia and Florus to the Mott street palace. Put the two moves together, and read Daddy Drum's telegram which says that Felix visited the people, who lives over Truman Lacey's store."

"I see," murmured Julius.

"You'd be very blind if you didn't," blurted Tommy, boldly. "Now, Mr. Julius, there's got to be some counterplaying that will completely alter the aspect of affairs. The young ferrets have met ere this and have exchanged reports. Their next move will be a dangerous one. It may prove fatal."

"By heavens! it shall not," cried Julius, springing up and overtipping the chair.

"Very well, then, show your teeth," grinned Tommy.

This conversation took place in a house some distance from the place on Mott street. It was one of Julius's secret quarters, and there he was not known as Julius James, one of the shrewdest young rascals in New York.

Of course he had passed his thirtieth year, but he was so well preserved that many a good judge of physiognomy would not have counted him past twenty-five.

If the couple knew anything about the disappearance of Clarence Lacey, they had not yet openly referred to it, but Tommy Todd's men-

tion of the Philadelphia merchant, and Daddy Drum's telegram to Julius taken together, would indicate that the secret was in their possession.

"If the boy Felix Fox saw Madeline, he may have looked into the desk," Julius said when he spoke again.

"Maybe he had better luck than you had," smiled the gamin. "You didn't find all you went after, Julius."

"Neither did he! I'll bet my head on it!" ejaculated the young man. "I think I found a good deal," he went on, tapping his left breast.

"I wouldn't keep it there," replied Tommy. "But maybe you know what's best, and I'm not the general commandin' this brigade."

"Well, I don't like it that Daddy Drum failed to come. He may turn up to-day sometime, but I wanted a prompt report."

"You can get it on the Bowery, at the office of Fox & Falcon," grinned the young gutter-rat, sarcastically. "I'm off now."

"Off for where?"

"Mebbe for the Bowery, mebbe not."

"You haven't seen Nan this morning?" asked Julius anxiously.

"No, but Mother Fitz tells me that she seems to be her old self again—not at all like she was last night."

Tommy was at the door twirling his well-battered hat on his dirty fingers, and eying Julius from under his light-brown lashes.

"Do you think Nan would peach if she got obstreperous?" asked the young man.

"If she got ob—what was that link of English, Julius?"

"If she got angry. I'll put it that way."

"I—I don't know," answered Tommy. "The fact is, you see, that Nan has some conscience, which is a mighty scarce article about the old place. She kinder remembers—"

"Remembers what?" cried Julius, leaning toward the gamin as he paused.

"The past!"

"What past? Nan hasn't any past!" flashed Julius, flushing.

"Well, mebbe she hasn't" observed Tommy Todd meekly. "A good many people have a past, but Nan may be out o' the common run o' folks."

"See here. You don't want to insinuate anything here," exclaimed the man.

"Did I?"

"Not exactly so, but—"

"Well, good-day, Julius! I'll see you 'twixx this and dark," and the door opened and let Tommy out before Julius could frame a reply.

"Mebbe he doesn't want to go too far with me!" hissed the boy balking in the street, and throwing a look toward the house he had just left. "If Nan has a past she's a right to think of it—a perfect right, and that's why she said last night that she never wanted to see Julius again. But I'm enlisting for the war and I can't afford to stir up a muss in my own camp."

As for the man, Julius, left to himself, he locked the door after Tommy Todd and went back to the table where he took a chair and drew some papers from his bosom.

These papers were tied with a blue twine, and were alike in shape and looks and three in number.

"I guess I didn't play lawyer to Madeleine Lacey for nothing," he ejaculated with a chuckle. "This is the document which proves that a good round sum is coming to a certain person whose identity is known to but one living person besides myself. How fortunate I am. This second paper shows that Clarence Lacey at age will be worth more than his father ever could expect to own, and this, the precious cap sheaf of the shock, proves the genuineness of the two! Who says I didn't find anything in Truman Lacey's desk? I hoodwinked Madeleine's mother to perfection, but the girl was a little too outspoken to suit me. Now, Tommy Todd intimates that I am to lose the game because the Bowery pair have struck an old scent. Well, I guess the outcome won't be anything of that sort! I'm well intrenched, and one of these days I'll be a nabob where it takes gold to keep the role!"

Julius put up the papers after an examination, and left the house. He did not proceed toward Mott street, probably because he did not want to disturb Nan with his presence.

In a little while he disappeared, and was lost to all his acquaintances until he felt a hand touch his in a throng.

Looking down Julius beheld the upturned face of Tommy Todd.

"The council is over and the sleuths are on the trail," came up to him in a whisper.

The man started.

"Where are they?"

"No signs that I have communicated," was the answer. "Felix is at our heels, and Florus isn't a mile away. By Jupiter! it galls me. Shall I show the young rat that I carry steel traps at the ends of my arms?"

"Would it be policy?"

"Mebbe it wouldn't be just that, but it'd do me a powerful lot o' good," was the response, and Tommy spoke the words through his teeth. "Issue the command, Julius, and watch for results."

If ever Julius was tempted it was then.

His blood had been stirred by the announcement that a spy was at his heels, and that spy Felix Fox, the boy detective of the Bowery!

He hesitated. What should he do?

Glancing down he saw Tommy Todd swelled with indignation and ready for a pugnacious encounter with the young ferret he had discovered.

"What is it, Julius?" put in the young gamin's voice at this juncture.

Julius overstepped the bounds of discretion and spoke three words:

"Go for him!"

Instantly Tommy Todd wheeled and looked for Felix.

The young sleuth was almost within reach at that moment, and a step on Tommy's part brought them together.

"Here's my compliments, Bow'ry rat!" ejaculated Tommy, and the next instant he dashed at Felix and dealt three tremendous blows in rapid succession.

The street Arab was no child with his muscles, and Felix, stunned by the impetuous attack and the swift strokes, reeled blinded toward the curb.

"Let 'em have it out!" yelled a dozen men in high glee over the collision. "Stand back, gentlemen, and— Keep that boy off!"

"That boy" was a stout lad who had bounded toward the wrestling pair. His eyes seemed to emit sparks of fire.

All at once he seized Tommy, jerked him loose, and pitched him almost headlong into a window.

Florus Falcon had come to the rescue!

CHAPTER VII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

No sooner had Julius seen the turn affairs had taken, than he regretted the orders he had issued to Tommy Todd.

Amid a shower of broken glass the Mott street gamin fell among a lot of confectionery, and the bystanders set up a shout when he scrambled to his feet more frightened than hurt.

"I'll make somebody sweat for this!" ejaculated Tommy in no humor to enjoy the issue of the battle. "What has become of Julius? Ran off and left me, I suppose! And where are the Bowery pair?"

By this time the proprietor of the shop was helping Tommy to the floor and while he did so he took good care to keep a tight hold on him.

"You'll have to settle the damages," he said.

"If? Why, confound it! I didn't do it!" vociferated Tommy.

"I don't see any mint drops on any other back but yours. Come, sir. Do you deny that I haven't just pulled you out of the wreck of my show-window?"

"No, but I didn't break it of my own accord; that's what I mean."

"I know; you had a fight. You street badgers are always fighting, and endangering life and property. What are you going to do?"

Tommy looked at the curious grinning crowd congregated at the door, but Julius was not there.

"What's the damage?" he asked.

"I'll take ten dollars and call it even."

"Why didn't you say ten million?"

"I charge only for the window."

"If I haven't got the necessary shekels, what?" asked the boy.

"I'll turn you over to the police."

This was something Tommy did not relish. He was in despair.

"What did you say the damage was?" sung out a voice whose tones sent a thrill through the king of gamins.

"Ten dollars."

The next moment a man came forward.

"Daddy Drum for a thousand!" mentally ejaculated Tommy, and when he saw the little old fellow extend a crisp ten-dollar bill, his wonder knew no bounds.

Some of the crowd applauded Daddy Drum's action, and several ventured to pat Tommy on

the shoulder as he made a break for the sidewalk.

Fortunately he had not been cut by the shattered glass, which was very singular considering the vehemence with which Florus Falcon had flung him through the window.

He imagined that the two boys had let him go to keep track of Julius, but this did not lessen his contempt for the man who after getting him into a serious muddle had willfully left him to his fate.

"When did you get back?" was Tommy's first question to Daddy Drum as the two walked away.

"I'm just in," was the answer.

"I saw you didn't come on the 6:30, as you telegraphed you would."

"No," growled the old man with a frown.

"I met with an accident in the Philadelphia, but it turned out to be a bonanza after all."

"How?" asked Tommy.

"I was accused of pocket-picking just as I was boarding the train to come over with Felix, the Bowery ferret."

Tommy Todd assumed a look of surprise.

"You accused of that. Daddy Drum?" he ejaculated.

"Indeed I was," winked the old fellow. "I was searched by the depot cop who found nothing o' course. Just then up steps Felix and says who I am, whereupon I was waltzed to the station while the train skipped out. They did not keep me there long, for I plead my cause so eloquently, told about a needy family in New York, and submitted to another search which of course proved bootless like the first."

"Of course!" laughed Tommy. "But the ten dollars which effected my release, Daddy Drum! I didn't know you were a millionaire."

"Oh, I found that bill at the ferry!" exclaimed the old man with a knowing look.

"Any more with it?"

"A few. But what are we to do now? I arrived on the scene in time to keep you from the clutches of the cops. Tell me about the accident."

Tommy did so, and Daddy Drum listened to the narrative with interest unabated to the close.

"You oughtn't reflect on Julius," said the little old man. "He found himself in a bad box, and it was necessary to rid himself of the espionage of the Bowery pair. Julius will apologize, and will make it all right otherwise when you see him. He can't afford to offend you, Tommy, and I guess Julius knows it, too."

Tommy growled something which showed that he was not altogether appeased by Daddy Drum's reply.

Suddenly his eyes brightened as if by a happy thought, and he looked up into his companion's face.

"Nan threatens to give us trouble, Daddy Drum," he exclaimed.

"She must not," was the quick retort, and if Tommy had looked at the speaker's side at that moment, he would have seen a hand shut with the words.

"Nan doesn't know much, anyhow," Daddy Drum suddenly went on.

"But she knows enough. She saw him, you know."

"Yes."

"And she thinks a good deal."

"The girl is too smart for her years," hissed Daddy Drum. "I never want a woman with me in any game. Confound it! they've got a tongue. But I say, Tommy, shall we hunt Julius up?"

"Julius or the young ferrets? I think I left my mark on Felix Fox's frontispiece, and if Florus Falcon had delayed his attack a minute, I would have trimmed him down. I haven't flourished in the streets for nothing. I'm no hot-house plant."

"I think we'd better find Julius," replied Daddy Drum. "I want to report to him, you know."

"What did Felix do in Philadelphia?"

"He went to the merchant's old quarters."

"So your dispatch said."

"He ransacked the old desk in the back room."

"How do you know that, Daddy Drum?"

"I was on the roof of the building in the rear, and I guess my eyes haven't lost any of their cunning."

"But Felix found nothing!" ejaculated Tommy.

"You are wrong. He found a paper that made his eyes snap."

"Could Julius have overlooked it?"

"He certainly did."

"What can it be?"

What but the important paper Julius wanted to secure so badly? You know what that is, Tommy Todd."

The eyes of the gamin got a knowing light, but he did not reply.

"Felix Fox found a very important paper in Truman Lacey's desk!" Daddy Drum went on. "He ended the search there like a man ceases to hunt for a lost diamond when he has found it."

"They are on the trail sure enough!" cried Tommy Todd.

"They are nowhere else," answered the old man. "We've got no flats to deal with, either. Those young ferrets will give us a peck of trouble unless we speedily baffle them."

Instead of replying, Tommy Todd began to whistle a lively air, and all at once he bounded across the street and vanished.

"In creation's name, what struck the young imp?" cried Daddy Drum, whose sharp little eyes could not follow the boy's movements. "He caught sight o' something, but what?"

In vain did he look for Tommy and wait for his return.

"He'll give an explanation when he turns up," the little spy went on. "I'll drop into the Palace as I'm in its vicinity, and see how near Nan is to laving us. She must not think of it. I'll set Mother Fitz to watching her, and the old lady is a cyclone when she is opposed."

Daddy Drum was not far from the Mott street hive, and a few minutes of rapid walking brought him to it.

He mounted the stairs with a good deal of eagerness, and his scrawny hand soon turned the knob of Nan's door.

A flood of light came into the room, and Daddy Drum halted beyond the threshold.

He looked in vain for Nan.

The little table stood in its usual place, and everything was in order, but the girl herself was gone.

"Mebbe she's below, visitin' mother Fitz," ejaculated Daddy Drum.

Just at this moment a heavy step sounded on his ear, and the Amazonian figure of Mrs. Fitzgerald filled the doorway as he turned.

"A leetle too late, Mister Drum," exclaimed Mother Fitz. "The young leddy got too foin for her keepin', an' so she's transferred her body to parts unknown!"

Daddy Drum started, and a cry of horror slipped from his throat.

"Did she run off?"

"Yis; an' by the powers! she stopped long enough in my door to say she'd rayther starve in the gutters than roll in wealth here."

Daddy Drum stood spellbound before Mother Fitz.

"I'd give a world bigger than this to have my claws at her throat this minute," he inwardly ejaculated. "Ho, here is Mr. Todd. Well, Tommy, the bird has flown."

"I got a glimpse o' her across the street, and that's why I left you so sudden," cried Tommy, who had just appeared. "I chased her six blocks, and when she was crossing again, a runaway horse hit her fair! It was an awful scene!"

"Holy mother! poor child!" cried Mrs. Fitzgerald.

"Was she killed?" asked Daddy Drum.

"Killed dead! I saw 'em pick her up," was the reply.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GAME UNCLOAKED.

NOT long after the lights of New York had been lit the night that followed our last events, a man might have been seen crossing Union Square. He walked rapidly and kept in the shadow of the trees just beginning to drop their leaves. It would have taken a quick eye to have followed him, for he dodged into an alley beyond the Park and vanished.

In the middle of this alley or between street and street he stopped and listened like a man who more than half believes himself watched.

It was Julius, but not the sleek, good-looking Julius whom we saw full blown in new clothes with Tommy Todd on the ferry-boat; but Julius in coarse garments, a slouch hat, and with no wax at the ends of his mustache.

When he satisfied himself that he was not watched, he resumed his journey, and was presently admitted to a brick house in the alley.

The person who let Julius in was a little man with a noticeable resemblance to Daddy Drum.

"How goes it, Nathan?" asked Julius with some show of anxiety.

"All well, I guess."

"And the young man?"

"Oh, he's doing splendidly. You want to see him?"

"Yes."
"Walk right up stairs. You'll find him at work."

Julius gave the man a smile, sprang up the steps at hand and reached, on the third floor, a door which he opened without ceremony.

Although he made very little noise, his entrance was instantly discovered by a person who sat at a table with a green shade over his eyes.

"Well, how goes the work?" asked Julius coming forward.

The person at the table removed the shade and looked up.

Then it was that he revealed the well-molded figure and comely face of a boy of near seventeen. His eyes were somewhat shaded by dark lines which told of much night work, when they should have been closed in sleep, and his hands betrayed little nervous disorders in their twitchings.

If the reader could have seen this boy as he leaned back in his chair and looked at Julius, he would have called him Clarence Lacey, the missing Philadelphia boy, but why?

Would it be because Julius had disguised himself to visit him; because he had slipped through Union Square Park like a hunted man?

Before the boy lay several old ledgers, and a number of papers, the latter arranged in piles after a certain system.

"What is the news outside?" asked the boy.

"Nothing, nothing at all."

"No news from the ship *Dolphin*?"

"She is hardly due yet. I hope you are not tired, Gerald?"

The boy glanced at the table and smiled.

"I get a little tired with these things, but they keep me employed," he said, making a gesture toward the papers. "My father never dreams that I am at this work."

Julius started slightly.

"Your father doesn't care much, I think," he replied. "When the *Dolphin* comes in with the important papers on board, we'll astonish the city."

"Do you think so? Might there not be failure?" asked the boy.

"Failure? No!" cried Julius. "Don't those papers speak of wealth which for years has been waiting for your hands?"

"They tell me that a good many years ago one Alice Bledsoe ran away from home and married."

"Yes."

"That she had a child who disappeared mysteriously."

"And who afterward fell into the hands of one Truman Lacey, and was adopted as his son."

"You tell me that," exclaimed the boy, quickly.

Julius flushed and gave the boy a sharp look of reproof.

"Can't you believe me?" he cried, bending toward the youth. "You have dropped the name of Clarence Lacey and for the present are Gerald Bledsoe, the boy whose mother was Alice Bledsoe, who married her cousin. You were never Truman Lacey's son, and he admitted it after you left Philadelphia. I have shown you a letter he wrote to his lawyer. Now, sir, don't you know that you are not Clarence Lacey?"

Julius spoke in the tones of a master, and the boy seemed to feel his indignation rise, for a flush came out on his temples.

"I sometimes think I'd be willing to give it all up for liberty to go back," he said. "Back to Philadelphia and never be anything as Clarence Lacey, or stay here and some time be rich as Gerald Bledsoe?"

"Why, boy, you don't want to play pauper in the Lacey house, do you?"

The boy said nothing, but it was evident that he was tired of the life to which he had been decoyed by the machinations of Julius, Tommy Todd and Daddy Drum.

Julius watched him closely, as if trying to guess the outcome of his silence.

"I'm willing to be Truman Lacey's son," he answered, at last.

Julius started forward, with a quick flash of anger in his eye.

"Look here! It is too late now!" he hissed, through his teeth, as his hand dropped upon the boy's shoulder. "You are going to be Gerald Bledsoe to the end of the business."

"If I don't want to be that person?"

"Yes! I'm going to tell you a truth. Truman Lacey is dead."

"My God!" cried the boy, springing to his feet, and confronting the cool rascal with a stentorian horror-stricken. "When did this terrible event take place?"

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"A few days ago. He fell dead in his store."

"Because I went away; because I permitted myself to be drawn to New York by a letter which held out inducements that turned my head for the moment! My father dead! Have mercy on me, Heaven! It is my work!"

Overcome and pale of face Clarence Lacey staggered back to the chair, and fell forward on the table with his face buried in his hands.

Julius watched him for a few moments with a cold, cynical smile, then he stepped forward and called the boy back to the present by a light tap.

"There is to be no retreat now, Gerald," he remarked. "Within five days I will be ready to prove that you are Alice Bledsoe's child. The money is waiting for the heir—twenty thousand pounds, or one hundred thousand dollars in Uncle Sam's currency."

"Take it!" cried the boy. "Take every dollar of it, and let me go back to Philadelphia where I was happy."

The response was a laugh that stung the boy to the heart.

"I'm no fool," exclaimed Julius. "Go back to your task—the copying of the contents of those books. You will get over this by and by, and, as Gerald Bledsoe, you'll never want to see the little dark rooms above Eighth street notion store. There will be a change within five days. I am going away now. Mind you, you don't want to give Nathan any trouble. The old fellow has his instructions."

Julius drew back, but there was no answer. Clarence Lacey turned to the papers with closed lips and put on the green shade again.

But no sooner had the door closed on the figure of Julius the rascal than he flung the shade across the room and sprang up.

"Dead! dead!" he cried, striding to the front window with clinched hands. "My father's death is on my hands. Why did I listen to those letters, and to the man who used to meet me in Independence Hall Park? Why didn't I repulse the schemers? Here I am—cooped up in the heart of New York, and the tool of men who are playing a villainous scheme for money. I am said to be Gerald Bledsoe, and not Clarence Lacey, and that I am heir to one hundred thousand dollars! What if it is true? They don't intend that my hands shall touch a dollar of it! The last letter signed 'Morgan' is the one that decoyed me here. In an evil hour I left home. A boy met me at the ferry; he took me to a large house, and several days later I awoke to find myself in this room with this strange task before me. I want to go back! I want to get out of the talons of these city vultures. They shall not keep me here another hour! I will be Clarence Lacey in spite of their traps!"

He sprang like a wild boy to the door through which Julius had just passed. Jerking it open he was about to rush out when he drew back from the grinning face of his keeper.

"No you don't!" laughed Julius. "Go back to your work and keep a still tongue in your head. If you persist in making an exhibition of yourself, something very unpleasant will happen."

At the same time Julius shut the door and turned the key in the lock, then he went downstairs with the heartless chuckle of the city villain.

As for Clarence Lacey, he stood spell-bound before the door for a moment, then he sprang to the table and caught up one of the heavy books.

"They find me from this moment a dangerous prisoner!" he cried, and then the book crashed through the window and fell down, down into a court far below.

At that same moment Julius was talking to the man who had admitted him.

"If he gets too high, tame him, Nathan," he ejaculated. "If you cannot master him *pull the cord*! We can get along without him, but it would lengthen the game. That's all."

"I'll do my part, never fear," was the answer, and the following minute when Julius was let out he adjusted his slouch hat and plunged down the alley.

"He will begin to doubt the *Dolphin* story now, ha, ha!" he laughed. "Well, it was a shrewd little lie, anyhow. The whole thing in a nutshell is that one hundred thousand dollars are coming to Gerald Bledsoe, and I'm going to pocket the whole amount. If Nathan pulls the cord I've got papers enough to finish the game, and the Bowery ferrets can't win a point! I wonder how Tommy came out of the fight? The last I saw of him he was going into a candy store by the front window."

"And he came out by the door, no thanks to you, Julius!" said a voice, and Julius looked down into the face of Tommy Todd.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HUNT FOR NAN.

MEANTIME the Bowery pair were not idle.

Felix by a quick use of his hands had not been severely punished by Tommy Todd, and, thanks to Florus's prompt interference, the attack was soon over.

The two boys followed Julius to the rooms which he occupied under a false name, and, confident that he would not need further watching just then, retired to their Bowery quarters.

It was late in the afternoon of the same day when Florus Falcon, well disguised, slipped into the open door of the Mott street tenement, and appeared suddenly to old Malachi the cobbler.

The son of St. Crispin had something important to communicate, and Florus soon knew that Nan had run away, only to encounter a loose horse which, according to Tommy Todd's story, had snuffed out her young life in the streets of New York.

The young detective was horrified at this story, and could only hope that it was not as bad as reported.

Old Malachi said also that Daddy Drum had come back, and that, from what he had overheard, the death of Nan greatly pleased him.

When Florus left "the Palace" it was to trace up the girl who had met with the shocking accident.

He pushed things vigorously and was not long finding out that Nan had been struck by the runaway animal just as Tommy Todd had described.

"The girl wasn't dead when they picked her up," said a spectator in reply to the boy's questions. "She looked like it, and all that, but she was breathing quite natural when they took her to the hospital."

The man did not know to what hospital Nan had been taken. He thought she was a poor street waif without friends, and he was surprised to see a boy like Florus inquiring after her.

A little further search led to the discovery that the girl had been carried to the House of Relief on Chambers street, and thither the young ferret directed his steps.

It happened that Florus knew one of the officers of the institution, and his name gained him a speedy admittance.

"How is the girl hurt by the runaway horse?" eagerly inquired the boy.

"A little better."

"Is she dangerous?"

"Yes, a limb broken, head badly hurt, and internally injured. We've got some hopes of her, though. Would you like to see her?"

Florus wanted to see Nan, and a few moments later he stood beside a cot looking down into the pale face of the hunted girl.

Her hurts had just been re-dressed, and the surgeon shook his head doubtfully, as he encountered the boy's look.

"There will be fever to-night," he whispered. "I don't like to see it come because I'm afraid she's not prepared for it."

At that moment Nan opened her eyes, which at once became fastened on Florus.

"Does she know you?" asked the surgeon.

"I think not," was the reply.

"But she looks at you steadily."

"I know him," murmured Nan in a painful manner. "He is old Malachi's friend."

"There! she has recognized you!" exclaimed the boy's hospital acquaintance.

Florus turned to the doctor.

"Can I talk to her?" he asked.

"A moment—no more."

The young detective bent over the cot and took the hand that lay on the cover.

"Yes, I am old Malachi's friend," he said in low tones.

"Then you don't want them to take me back?"

"Not for the world."

"I'm glad of that. I'd sooner die here," answered Nan with a shudder. "Somebody was pursuing me. I saw him just before the horse struck me. It was Julius's young spy—Tommy Todd. Don't I know that they don't want me outside of Mott street? They think I might betray them. Ah! it is a villainous scheme!"

At this juncture the touch of the surgeon was felt on Florus's arm.

"That will do for this time," he said, gently.

"One second," cried Nan, with an imploring look. "He is somewhere in Bottle Alley. I heard Tommy say so."

"In Bottle Alley?" echoed Florus. "A thousand thanks, girl. You shall not be betrayed," and he turned upon the doctor with a smile of triumph on his face.

When Florus emerged from the hospital, the day was about to take its departure. He promised to call the next morning to inquire after the girl, and he added that he hoped to have some good news for her.

As he walked away a little man who had watched Florus, walked up to the door and jerked the bell.

In a moment it was opened by the man who had just dismissed the boy.

"Well, sir, what is it?"

"How is the young leddy what got run over to-day?" inquired the caller.

The man in the hall looked him over from head to foot.

"Is she a relative of yours?" he asked.

"Yes, my niece," was the reply.

"I've come to see how she is and to take her home if—"

"You cannot have her, sir," was the firm interruption.

"Is she that bad?"

"She is very bad!"

"Going to die, eh?"

"We cannot tell."

"Is she flighty?"

"At times."

"What does she talk about?"

It was evident that the janitor was becoming disgusted at these questions.

"I cannot keep an information bureau for your benefit," he said somewhat tartly, for he did not like the appearance of the man on the step.

"What ar' ye here for? I'd like to know," growled the stranger while his eyes got an evil twinkle. "It's a fine thing when the young leddy's uncle can't get information about her. I'll see that somebody is reported, sir. I will."

"All right," replied the janitor. "To tell the truth, I don't think you are the patient's relative. Good-night, sir!"

And the door shut in the caller's face gently, but with a firmness which effectually barred him out.

"Living yet, is she?" ejaculated the little man as he turned toward the street. "Tommy was just a little previous when he reported her dead. He looked once and concluded that Nan was a corpse. One of the Bowery ferrets has just left. I wonder if he got to talk with Nan? They could let him in, but me—no! they had to shut me out! I hope the boy got no information. If Nan is dangerous, they wouldn't let her talk to him. I guess we're safe yet, but I'd like to have my fingers at your throat, Florus Falcon."

The little old man moved rapidly away, and the street lights soon revealed the well-known features of Daddy Drum.

Florus went back to the room on the Bowery. He had some very important news to communicate to Felix and was anxious to let it out.

But he found the room untenanted. Going to the wall he opened a secret slide and discovered a note telling him to wait for the writer if he came within a certain time; and then Florus began to wait for Felix.

Picking up an afternoon paper he searched for and found a brief account of Nan's accident, but there was now no information in it for him. As he threw the sheet aside his quick ear caught the sound of footsteps on the stair in the hall. They were not Felix's.

A moment later a knock sounded on his door, and Florus bade the visitor enter.

"Good-night," exclaimed the person who came forward, a man of thirty-five or forty in outward appearance, well clad and with a full glossy black beard.

"Are you one of the firm of Fox & Falcon?"

"I am Florus Falcon," was the answer.

"You transact business for the firm, I presume, give advice, take cases and so forth?"

Florus nodded.

"Well, Mr. Falcon, I want your services in a peculiar case. Can I talk without reserve here?" and the speaker threw a glance about the room.

"This is our private office, sir," responded Florus.

"All right!" the man leaned forward. "The business to transact with you is *this*—ha! ha!"

The next second Florus received a terrible blow in the face and before he could touch the floor he was seized by the person who dealt it.

"We've got to clear the way, I see!" continued the man lifting the senseless youth. "The ferrets are getting a little too dangerous. This one is as knowing as his famous partner. Ha! one blow quite finished him! Well, I put my muscle into it. It was a blow for a fortune!"

Several minutes later a man walked out of the house with something like a large bundle in his arms. A carriage stood in the gutter and on the box holding the lines sat a good chunk of a

boy with light hair visible under the brim of his hat.

With one hand the man opened the cab door and entered with his burden, then the young driver touched the horses with the whip and the vehicle rattled away.

"This is a necessary move," ejaculated the driver. "Something had to be done against the Bowery sleuths. We've got to take 'em one at a time. The hidea originated with me, and a good one it was, too. I tell you I'm good at hideas, or my name isn't Tommy Todd." And he chuckled as he struck the horses again.

CHAPTER X.

MASTER TODD IS CORNERED.

WHEN Felix Fox came back to the little quarters on the Bowery he of course found them deserted. There was nothing to tell him aught of the scene which had lately taken place there, and the young detective at first very naturally thought that Florus had been detained somewhere, and that he would turn up before long.

Intending to come back soon, Felix went down-stairs, and in the hall encountered a young man who had rooms in the same building.

"Who was taken from the house to the hospital awhile ago?" asked the man on catching sight of Felix.

"No one," answered the boy promptly. "Why do you ask?"

"As I came in a short time ago I met a man on the stairs. He had some body in his arms, well wrapped up, and seeing that I gave his bundle more than a passing look, he muttered something about 'poor fellow' and 'the hospital' and passed on. A minute later a cab left the gutter. I thought you might know, sir."

Felix shook his head, but it was evident that the man's story had gained a foothold in his mind.

"What was the man like?" he asked.

"Rather tall, not very young any more, full black beard, and sparkling eyes."

"A full beard?"

"Yes, sir, but upon me word it seemed to be a little awry."

"As if it was false?"

"That's it exactly."

Felix went back up-stairs.

Turning on the gas he submitted the room to a close inspection, but had to give up without a solution of the mystery.

The man whom he had encountered below was a new inmate of the house, a poor mender of violins, who had a room in the rear part. He could be deceived by the story told by the man in the black beard, but not Felix.

The young sleuth knew that no body in the house was sick enough to be taken to the hospital.

"The black beard was awry, was it?" suddenly ejaculated Felix when he had finished his inspection of the room. "Black eyes, too, and not very young. I believe I see a little ways into the mystery. Florus won't come back any more to-night unless somebody helps him out of the clutches of the foe. I think I know what is to be done. Ha! you have taken the bull by the horns, Julius. We were getting a little too close, were we? Well, we are liable to get closer still!"

Just two hours later a boy hurrying along Grand street near Mott, was caught by another youth and brought to a sudden stand.

"Here! you don't want to stop a gent in this manner," snapped the one checked. "I'm attending to my own business, I am, and—Ho! I did not recognize you at first."

"I presume not, Mr. Todd," was the laughing rejoinder. "You knew me well enough to-day when you attacked me like a tiger to get pitched headlong into a candy store."

Tommy Todd frowned and bit his lips, then glared madly at Felix Fox, whose grip seemed to drive all blood from his arm.

"What do you want?" he growled.

"A little conversation with you, Tommy Todd," was the answer.

"Sorry; but I can't grant it. We're not on the best of terms, you know—"

"Which shall not prevent the talk," interrupted Felix, somewhat sternly.

Tommy was seen to draw his figure up as he threw a quick glance around, and Felix moved closer and eyed him coolly.

"I know your slippery nature very well," he resumed. "I've seen you at all hours on the streets of New York, and in some work which is not very nice. I won't detain you long, Tommy Todd, if you incline to be half decent. If you

are not disposed to go, I shall call up the cop on yon corner, and you may sleep to-night in quarters not unknown to you."

A glance at the giant policeman across the street was enough to make Tommy mute.

The young rascal had a wholesome fear of the officers, and he knew that his reputation was enough to secure his arrest and detention without any specific charges.

"Where shall we go?" he asked Felix.

"A little distance down the Bowery."

"To your room?"

"Yes."

"Forge ahead, then, Mr. Fox. I don't want to be detained long, for I've got business of importance on hand, and I can't lose any time without losing money."

The coolness of the gamin king was really diverting, and Felix gave him to understand that he was not going to escape. To prove this Tommy Todd suddenly felt something click at his wrist, and he knew that he was united to the young ferret by a band of steel.

He did not resist, but went quietly along, and when Felix turned on the gas in his room, he saw the flash of a pair of angry eyes.

In an instant the manacle was removed, and Tommy was asked to take a chair, which he did. Throwing back his hat, he ran his hand through his shock of flaxen hair and calmly crossed his legs. Then he looked at Felix in a manner which proclaimed him ready for the talk.

"You were here awhile ago," began Felix.

"I, sir?" cried Tommy, with a look of astonishment, which would have deceived the most wary.

"You came with Julius. You drove a cab, and while Julius attended to some very important business in this house, you waited in the gutter."

A smile came to Tommy's lips.

"Oh, come, Mr. Fox. You want to elevate me to distinction before I deserve it. I the driver of a cab? By jingo! this is a rise in the world—about six feet, eh?" and the young scamp leaned back in the chair and laughed till he colored.

"Tommy is playing a bluff game now. I understand the young scoundrel!" mentally ejaculated Felix, as he waited for the gamin to finish his assumed merriment.

"Well, when Julius came out of the house, you drove him away," the boy detective continued.

"This is news to me, six o'clock edition, no other paper in the city contains it!" grinned Tommy.

It was a good time for Felix to lose his temper, but he knew that such a break would not do.

He was dealing with a fox and a lion, the two natures united in the brain and sinew of Tommy Todd.

"The game is about up," said Felix, when he began again. "Julius's tracks have been traced since the first; the letter signed 'Morgan' is known to be his, and it is well known that it decoyed a certain youth from a very happy home. Mr. Todd, Clarence Lacey went straight to the Mott street den under charge of one of Julius's accomplices. The boy was seen in the house up to the moment of his disappearance. Your hand is seen here and there all through the game. It got in its work to-night. Why did Julius make his last play? Were we too close on him, Tommy Todd?"

"All this is Greek to me. You talk about a boy being decoyed from home; you even intimate that I had a hand in the scheme. I am said to be the accomplice of one Julius."

Felix leaned forward. "Do you deny?" he cried, fixing his eyes on the gutter imp. "Do you say that you know not Julius, that you never heard of Clarence Lacey? Why, Mr. Todd, you're wanted badly at Sing Sing."

The mention of the dread prison seemed to take Tommy's breath. He fell back as if a pair of handcuffs had been thrust into his face, and it was amusing to see his frightened look.

Felix saw his moment and followed it up.

"There may be a chance for you," he continued. "I don't want to send you up, Tommy Todd. I'm after bigger game. If I had a pretended friend who would desert me when I got into trouble, I wouldn't feel myself under obligations to help him at his dirty work."

"Who do you mean?"

"You know. You haven't forgotten who walked away and left you to be pitched into a window, and to go to the station, or pay the damage out of your own pocket."

"By jingo! it was a mean trick!" flashed Tommy. "And I've told him so, too! Don't you know, Mr. Fox, that if he hadn't issued

certain orders, I wouldn't have attacked you today?"

"Of course he egged you on," said Felix, adroitly. "And when he saw you getting the worst of it he turned his back and left you to your fate. This is the kind of a man you serve. One of these days when we've pinned him down, he'll coolly turn and push you into Sing Sing. Don't you see it?"

"By Jupiter! he sha'n't do that!" cried the young gamin.

"He will if you stay with him."

The next moment Tommy Todd thrust one hand into his pantalo pocket and took out a penny.

Leaning over the table, he flipped the coin toward the ceiling and watched its descent. It fell on the table, head up.

Felix looked on with silent curiosity. What did it mean? Was Tommy out of his head?

Three times the coin was thrown up and watched, and then Tommy turned with a smile to the boy shadow.

"Heads won and heads means Tommy Todd!" he exclaimed. "Now what do you want to know, Felix Fox?"

CHAPTER XI.

BUT HALF-BETRAYED.

FELIX could not suppress a start at this sudden action on the young gamin's part.

Had Tommy decided by the turn of a copper to desert Julius and give all his plans away?

"You know just what I want," responded the young detective to Tommy's last words. "In the first place, I want to know what became of Florus."

"Your partner?"

My friend Florus Falcon. I have discovered that Julius stole a march on him, and that the cab that bore him away was driven by Tommy Todd."

"Not all the way," exclaimed the gutter-king.

"You mean that you were relieved before you reached your destination?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"By Julius himself."

"Ha! then he was afraid to trust you to the end."

"It looks that way," growled Mr. Todd. "When I was looking for nothing o' the kind, I was told to stop and Julius said he guess he'd take the lines."

"And he did so?"

"Yes."

"What had become of Florus?"

"I don't know."

It was evident that Tommy was telling all he knew about the singular occurrence.

"The rascal may have dropped Florus into the street!" mentally exclaimed Felix. "He could do this without being seen by his driver, but I think he relieved Tommy because he feared to trust him through the whole play. 'When you were relieved you let Julius go on?' he asked of the boy.

"Yes. When Julius shows his teeth he is positively dangerous."

"And you were afraid he'd show them last night?"

Tommy made no reply.

"Look here," suddenly resumed Felix, taking a flat packet from beneath his coat. "Did you ever see this letter before?"

As he spoke the boy spotter unfolded a piece of paper which he handed to Tommy, whose eyes were already fastened on it.

"That's the letter what did the job!" suddenly exclaimed the gamin.

"What job?"

"It decoyed the boy to New York."

"Clarence Lacey?"

"Yes, the old notion merchant's son."

"Who wrote this letter?"

"Julius."

"He signed the name 'Morgan' to it for a purpose."

"He made Clarence Lacey believe that he was a lawyer named Morgan. I stood at Julius's elbow when he penned the letter. Ah! Julius is a slick one, Mr. Fox, and he's not got his match in Gotham."

"We will wait till the game ends," smiled Felix. "Now, Mr. Todd have you no ideas about Florus's present whereabouts?"

Tommy Todd slowly shook his head.

"Would Daddy Drum know?"

The Mott street gamin burst into a loud laugh.

"You don't get Daddy Drum to give anything away!" he exclaimed. "Why, if he thought I was here talking thus to you, he'd

wait outside with his fingers itching to nestle behind my windpipe, and I tell you with emphasis, Mr. Fox, Daddy Drum's fingers ar' the last things I want there!"

"But would he be likely to know anything about Florus? that is what I'm after just now," persisted Felix.

"He might. I haven't seen him for some time. Are you through with me?"

It seemed to Felix that Tommy's desire to get away was a sudden one.

"In a moment," was the reply. "I've now reached a very important part of the hunt. Clarence Lacey is somewhere in the hands of Julius."

Tommy moved uneasily in his chair as Felix paused.

"If you do not know what has become of Florus, the whereabouts of the Philadelphia boy are not unknown to you."

"I'm afraid I can't help you there," the gamin answered.

"What! don't you know?" cried Felix, leaning forward and then his eyes got a sudden threat.

"You still cling to Julius, I see; well, if you want to reap the harvest I shall not object."

Tommy almost started up.

"You mean that you'll turn me over if I don't tell you what became of Clarence Lacey?" ejaculated Tommy.

"I did not say so."

"But I can see by your eyes that you intend to do it."

"You can try me," answered Felix with a smile. "Awhile ago you said that Julius had treated you shabbily on several occasions. Don't you see that he wants to shake you off after you have done so much for him? He wouldn't trust you to handle the line; all the way to-night, and he deserted you after you got pitched into the candy store."

"Hang Julius! he's a dog!" snapped young Mr. Todd, coloring.

"But your friend. I understand it, Tommy Todd. You don't like Julius very well, but you can't break the bond of union. The spoils of the game look too big for you. All right, Mr. Todd. I have nothing more to say."

And Felix rose to a coolness that astonished the young gamin.

Tommy looked at him from his chair too amazed to speak.

"I'd like to lock up," said Felix. "I'm going away."

Tommy got up and stepped back.

"What are you going to do?" he stammered.

"Why, I intend to beat the game—to run every rascal in it down and land them where they'll not be barked at by dogs!" was the quick reply.

"Am I included?"

"I take in all," exclaimed Felix. "If you can't tear yourself away from the man who refuses to trust you, you'll have to take the future as you find it, Mr. Todd. I may see you later. Remember in the mean time, that I intend to show no mercy. One if not two of the meanest crimes in existence has been committed, and I have sworn that the perpetrators every one, accomplices and principals, shall be hunted down."

By this time Felix's movements had pushed Tommy to the door, and a moment later the young detective was going down the stairs toward the street door.

"Shall I make a clean breast of it, or let 'im go ahead?" the Mott street gamin asked himself.

"By jingo! I don't like Julius for the way he's snubbed me lately, but if I desert him I'll never get a dollar of the spoils when he succeeds. But that boy yonder talks about Sing Sing which makes my blood run cold. Hang it all! I'm between the devil and the deep sea!"

Felix appeared to take no further notice of Tommy Todd who was eying him with the watchfulness of a hawk, and before the young scamp could decide what to do the detective left the house.

Tommy got out upon the sidewalk as soon as possible but Felix had vanished.

"Not so bad after all," ejaculated Tommy.

"When I pitched the cent up and heads won I concluded to give Julius away, but the more I thought about it the less I felt like doin' it. I'll go to Julius' house and see what's next on the programme. The boy is safe and Daddy Drum will see that the Bowery pair don't get the start of us. Hello! think o' Satan and he's on hand."

At that moment Tommy Todd was staring into the parchment colored face and glittering eyes of Daddy Drum.

The little old man had slipped up to him without noise.

"What did you discover in the ferrets' nest?"

smiled Daddy Drum, nodding toward the house which Tommy had just left at Felix's heels.

"What house?" exclaimed the gamin, feigning astonishment.

"Come, no chaff! You came out of the house where the Bowery pair have their office. You followed one of the two out. Wasn't it Felix, Tommy?"

Mr. Todd found himself fairly caught, and he knew that it would never do to try to talk against the evidence of Daddy Drum's keen eyes.

"It was Felix," Tommy admitted.

"The young fox who got me into the cop's clutches in the Quaker City!" grated Daddy Drum. "What trail has he struck now?"

"I think he's off the scent."

"Felix Fox off? You don't mean that, Tommy Todd?"

The boy nodded.

"I know better than that. What did you discover in the house?"

"Confound it, nothing!"

"Was there nothing to discover?"

The eyes of Daddy Drum were fixed on Tommy.

"You should have been with me," he suddenly exclaimed.

"Why?"

"I found Nan."

"You?"

"Daddy Drum, Master Todd. She wasn't killed by the runaway horse, but the doctors say there's not a world of hope for her, for which I am thankful!"

"Where is she?"

"She's at the hospital, but they won't admit any of our crowd," added Daddy Drum.

"They let the other boy see her to-night."

"Florus Falcon?"

"Yes."

"Daddy Drum, don't you know what Florus Falcon is after?" cried Tommy clutching the old man's arm.

"Why, of course. He and his partner are hunting for Clarence Lacey. They are beating New York high and low. But with all their shrewdness they will find nothing. There are no traitors in our ranks unless—"

The speaker paused and his tones dropped as his face crept closer to Tommy Todd.

"Unless what, Daddy Drum?" asked the king of the gamins scarcely breathing.

"I say unless Nan tells what she might know before she dies!" was the answer.

Tommy took in a breath of relief. Daddy Drum did not suspect him and he would not feel the skeleton fingers at his throat.

"We want to find out what Florus Falcon knew when he left the hospital," continued Daddy Drum. "If Nan told him anything we must know it. It is important."

"Where is the young ferret now?"

"I think I could find him but he might give us no information. If she told Florus anything it was the secret. You know what that is."

Tommy's look told that he knew.

"See here! There's some good actin' in you, Tommy," continued Daddy Drum. "Can't you go to the hospital as Nan's brother?"

"I? why—"

"No crawfishin' now!" interrupted Daddy Drum. "You must go. I say so and you know who I am!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE FALCON'S CAGE.

LET us go back a piece, and for a little while follow the fortunes of Florus Falcon.

It was true, as Tommy Todd has told Felix, that at a certain stage in the proceedings Julius took the lines and dismissed the boy driver of the cab.

"I can't trust that young rascal any further than I can see him," ejaculated Julius. "He used some pretty cool language toward me because I let him get out of the candy store window as best he could; but I'm not prepared to dismiss him for he knows too much. I may want to use him by and by, Daddy Drum is worth a dozen Tommy Todds."

The vehicle went on and on, out of one street and into another. Julius evidently knew the shortest way to his destination and was pursuing it.

It was some time after his startling coup on the Bowery that a few people saw a cab enter a narrow street where the noise it made suddenly grew still.

Julius leaped from the box and opened a cab door. The next moment he took out something which was strangely human in shape and carried it to a dark portal near at hand.

Then Julius and his burden disappeared all at

once and the well blown horses waited ten minutes for his reappearance.

Need we say that the person carried into the house in the alley was Florus Falcon, the young Bowery detective whom we have seen pounced upon eagle-like by the wary Julius?

While the cab was moving away a woman with the swarthy skin of an Egyptian was holding a light over a figure that lay on a narrow cot in a very small room.

"I don't see why he had to fetch him here," murmured the woman, who was in middle life, with well-set features, and a pair of sloe-black eyes. "There are a dozen other places to which he might have taken him, but he seems to think that I am the proper person."

Florus lay unconscious and like one dead on the bed, and of course heard none of the words of the woman.

"He's handsome, isn't he?" she went on. "It's a pity that he's incurred the undying hatred of Julius. A sleuth, eh?—a man-hunting hound and not past seventeen, either!"

She stole from the room and left Florus alone. After awhile the youth began to shake off the fatal lethargy.

His head seemed ready to burst, his ideas were confused, and his joints racked with pain.

Slowly back to him came the events of the night: the visit to Nan in the hospital, the coming of the black-bearded man to the Bowery, then the blow, then—oblivion!

He now knew that he had fallen into Julius's clutches; he had a confused recollection of being borne through the streets in a jolting vehicle, nothing more.

Where was he—in his old room? No; it could not be. Leaving the cot he went to the window which he had singled out by the stars far beyond it. One look told him that he was in strange quarters.

There were bars of iron across the window. The sight maddened Florus.

"Am I shut up like a wild beast?" he cried, striding to the door which, as a matter of course, he found locked. "Where am I?" And then he struck the door several hard blows to command attention.

"Ho! in there!" suddenly said a voice beyond the door.

Florus desisted.

"That is no man," he said to himself. "Is it the voice of my jailer? Ah! I am to have the question solved."

The next moment the door opened and closed, then a match clicked on the wall.

Florus stood face to face with the woman who had lately left him.

He started when he saw her.

"You're wide awake now," the woman exclaimed with a smile.

"I think I ought to be," answered Florus, and then he went forward and looked keenly into her face.

"I haven't seen you for six months, Blanche."

The next second the woman went back almost to the wall, and gave Florus a frightened stare.

"You don't know me!" she cried.

"Don't I?" laughed the young ferret.

"You do not. You never saw me before to-night," she went on boldly.

"If Felix Fox were here, he'd call you Blanche just as I have done."

"Felix Fox—who is he?"

"Come, Blanche! Your attempt to play ignorance won't work. I did not expect to see you here, much less did I think you were in with Julius."

"Julius?"

"Ah! yes, the Julius who served me a shrewd, cool trick awhile ago," answered Florus. "Let me see: How many squares am I from the old room on the Bowery?"

It was apparent that the woman had been recognized by the young detective; her look showed it now, and while Florus talked, her brow seemed to darken.

"You don't want to go back, Blanche?" suddenly continued the boy.

"Back to—"

The woman sprung toward Florus as she spoke, but stopped short and grew pale while her eyes regarded him.

"Yes, I mean back to the old place," said the boy.

"My God, no!" was the cry. "I've had enough of that. But I can't be turned by threats. I am loyal to the man who got me out."

"To Julius! I know that he had very little to do with your release, Blanche."

"You are talking for yourself now."

"Julius took the credit; others did the work."

When the prison doors opened to let you into the sunshine, he was the first to congratulate you, wasn't he?"

"He was, but—"

"I thought so. He thought he would have future use for you."

The woman still kept her black eyes riveted upon the young sleuth.

"What's between you two?" she suddenly asked.

"Nothing much," smiled Florus. "I don't want Julius to do as he pleases—"

"I understand. You are a city sleuth. I would know this because you are Felix Fox's friend. You are fighting Julius."

"I am against him in the game he has on hand. You know what that game is, Blanche."

"Not a word about it. He never told me."

"What if I tell the story?" asked the boy.

"I'd rather you would not. I don't want to carry any more secrets."

"But you can take one more, Blanche."

There was no reply.

During the next few minutes Florus was engaged on the exposure of Julius's scheme as he and Felix had found it out.

He mentioned no names, but told about Clarence Lacey's flight from home, the decoy letter, the short life in the Mott street tenement and a few other details known to the reader.

To all of this Blanche listened without an interruption.

The story interested her; she let no part of the narrative escape her ears.

"It is a game for money, isn't it?" she ejaculated, when Florus had reached the end of the story.

"For gold—like all of Julius's schemes. But don't you see it has already taken life? I have no doubt that the flight of the Philadelphia boy hastened Truman Lacey's end."

"It may be so," murmured Blanche. "Haven't you been able to find the boy's trail after leaving Mott street?"

"Would Julius have played his stroke to-night if I had made no discovery?" cried Florus. "Now, Blanche, what are you going to do? There ought to be a turning point some time in your life."

"There! hush up!" and the woman sprung toward the young sleuth with the ferocity of a tigress displayed on her countenance. "Don't talk to me about a turning point in my life. I know what's what. I see! You want to work on my sympathies. You want me to pity the Philadelphia boy because his father fell dead the day after you say Julius decoyed him from home. Did you say the man's name was Lacey?"

"Truman Lacey."

"Maybe he's the Lacey I ought to hate with all my nature," and Blanche's eyes got a demonic glitter that might have frightened a boy less brave than Florus Falcon. "Don't you know that it was for getting my hand into a Lacey's pocket that I went to—you know where?"

"Yes; but it was not the Philadelphia Lacey."

"You don't know. It might have been. I hate the name. I curse the whole Lacey tribe from the first to the last. So you want to help a Lacey against Julius; you want me to pity a boy whose name has disgraced me for life. No! I harden my heart against that. You want me to turn you out so you can trip Julius and give another Lacey a chance at me. Never, my young sleuth! I have orders from Julius, and I guess I'll obey 'em!"

That was the end of it.

The next moment the door opened and shut, and Florus heard a derisive laugh beyond the threshold.

CHAPTER XIII.

FELIX A NIGHT-SHADOW.

COOPED up in the strange house with, as he could easily imagine, a dark fate of some kind hanging over him, Florus Falcon had cause for fear.

The woman who had just left he had recognized as a city pickpocket, who had lately been released from prison before the expiration of her sentence. He was inclined to believe that the name of Lacey had damaged his cause, for, strange to relate, it was a Lacey who had sent Blanche to the Penitentiary.

Now Florus was alone again with Julius, Daddy Drum and Tommy Todd having full swing in their villainous scheme. What was Felix doing? Had he missed him, and, if so, would he suspect that Julius had played a bold hand and entrapped one of the Bowery pair?

Blanche did not come back any more, and at last the boy flung himself upon the hard cot and fell asleep.

We know that Felix Fox had found a clew to Florus's disappearance. He had pumped Tommy Todd at the right moment, but the young gamin did not know whither Florus had been taken, for Julius had refused to trust him all the way. Felix resolved to follow up the clew he had obtained, and when he left the Bowery quarters after his interview with Tommy, it was with this intention in his mind.

While he quickly disappeared to Tommy Todd, as we have seen, he witnessed the meeting between the boy and Daddy Drum. He kept track of the two until they led him to a certain house into which he had before tracked Julius.

The pair did not remain inside long, and their sudden reappearance told Felix that Julius was not at home.

When the pair walked away the young sleuth was at their heels again, and they led him a chase of several squares.

"Now, good-night," ejaculated Daddy Drum to Tommy. "Remember; you go to the hospital to-morrow. You are Nan's brother. I want you to play the game in style; no failure, Mr. Todd. We've got to know whether she told the young spotter anything."

Tommy promised to obey, and a moment later the two worthies had parted, and were walking in opposite directions.

"I'll make Daddy Drum my game," exclaimed Felix. "Tommy is likely to go to the Mott street nest and turn in. Daddy Drum wants to find Julius, and so do I."

The little old man walked rapidly away followed by Felix who at times had some difficulty in keeping him in sight.

All at once Daddy Drum stopped and came back toward the boy.

It was an important moment, a critical one, too, for the Bowery ferret.

Felix had time to dodge behind a pedestrian before Daddy Drum came up, and the next second the spy touched his sleeve as he flitted past.

"What turns the old fellow back?" mentally exclaimed Felix. "Ah! I see; he passed somebody who has attracted him. By Jove! it is Julius!"

By this time Daddy Drum had reached the side of a man who was walking at a good gait. A soft hat was pulled down over the brow, and the collar of the coat was turned up in a manner that partly hid the face; but now Felix could see despite these attempts to baffle identity, that the man was Julius.

A glance of recognition had already passed between Julius and Daddy Drum, and the two were walking side by side exchanging low words which Felix could not hear. He followed them back to the young man's lodgings and saw the door close behind them.

"I'd give all I'm worth to be beyond that door a little while," cried the young detective, when forced to halt before the house in one of the upper front rooms of which soon appeared a light. "There will be no secrets between Julius and Daddy Drum."

As Felix was about to turn away a man ran up the steps of the house, opened the door and disappeared. He was not in the house more than two minutes, when he came out and walked hurriedly away.

"He did not shut the door in his hurry!" cried the boy. "Now, before somebody discovers it, I will see if the circumstances will do me any good."

A little while later Felix Fox crept up a narrow stairway beyond the door which the boarder had left ajar like a careless fellow, and reached a landing where a gas jet burned with a bluish flame. The interior of the house was new to him, but his acquaintance with houses of its kind gave it a seeming familiarity which prevented it from being strange.

Felix had moved with caution, for he was in a dangerous place. A door and a wall separated him from Julius and the tigerish Daddy Drum, and to be discovered in the house by these two rascals might cost him life itself.

The boy's first move was to turn the gas off and the upper landing was dark. No one could see him now and when he planted himself at a certain door, which he believed opened into the room occupied by Julius and Daddy Drum, he called all his keen senses to his aid.

For a moment he heard nothing, then came through the keyhole the well-known voice of the little spy.

"Tommy is going to try it to-morrow!" said Daddy Drum. "I told him that we must know whether the girl told the young hawk anything."

Confound it! why didn't the runaway horse finish her while he was at it?"

"You don't seem to like Nan," remarked the voice of Julius.

"I don't! thar!" was the response. "An' I don't care who knows it. I tried to get into the Chambers street hospital myself, but the smart Aleck, who guards the door, wouldn't let me get my nose inside. I didn't look much like Nan's uncle, that's a fact, Julius; but mebbe they'll let her brother Tommy see her to-morrow."

"They'll do nothing of the kind," replied Julius. "I'd be the man to go if it wasn't for one thing."

"What's that?"

"Why, Nan doesn't like me. She left the Palace on my account."

"No! she got too high-toned for the place!" snapped Daddy Drum. "If she took the secret with her, and I believe she did, she's the danger in the game. If she knows where we've got the Philadelphia boy hid, she—"

"I don't see how she can know it," interrupted Julius.

"Oh, she's shrewd!"

"And pretty, too," laughed the young man.

"I never look at that, though I own that it's an item in the eyes of lots of young fellows like you, Julius," chuckled Daddy Drum, and Felix could picture the expression on the spy's face at that moment. "Well, if she told the Bowery hawk anything, you've got to keep him close, very close."

"Leave that to me."

"Yes, sir," answered Daddy Drum. "If you are sure you were not followed when you were playing the trick, it is all right."

"I was not."

"Where was Felix Fox at the time?"

"I don't know."

"There is where the trouble is, Julius. If you have clipped the hawk's wings, well and good."

"There was no reply for a moment."

"Daddy Drum, you must go on a mission," exclaimed Julius, when he spoke again.

"To Philadelphia?"

"No."

"Well, I'm glad of that. I saw the inside of a station-house when I was last there, and I don't want to repeat the experience."

"I am going to send you to the keeper of the ferret," continued Julius.

"No written message, Julius. I don't like 'em."

"Well, you shall have none. I want you to go to Blanche."

"Blanche o' Sing Sing, eh?"

"Yes. I want you to tell her, that somebody needn't see the sun. She will understand it."

"Where is Blanche?"

The voice of Julius sunk to a whisper, and the words that passed his lips the sharp ears of Felix Fox did not catch.

"I must not lose sight of Daddy Drum," he exclaimed. "It all depends on my eyes. I know Blanche, for I helped, after a manner, to send her up for her great feat at purse-lifting. If the woman is now in the hands of Julius, the silken rogue, she will stoop to anything."

It was some time before Felix heard the men again.

"Within five days, Daddy Drum, the game will be entirely won," suddenly continued Julius.

"What does the Quaker City boy think by this time?"

"He feels his oats."

"Wants to rebel, eh?"

"Yes."

"Let me at him, Julius!" cried Daddy Drum.

"No; Nathan is equal to the occasion. Besides, we can win without the youngster. I've got all the papers, and, to tell the truth, I wish he was out of the way. Well, you can now go to Blanche with the orders. The other Bowery hawk we will trap inside of twenty-four hours, and then—then, Daddy Drum, the field will be clear!"

Felix heard two chairs pushed back, and steps beyond the door.

The next instant he left his station, and hugged the wall in the darkest corner of the hall.

Presently the door opened, and Daddy Drum appeared.

"I hope Tommy got onto something in the Bowery to-night," he said ere he turned away.

"Was he there?" cried Julius.

"I saw him come down from the hawk's nest."

"You did?"

"I did."

"Alone?"

"Yes, but not a second behind Felix Fox. I shook him up and asked him what he discovered, and he said nothing."

Felix heard an oath beyond the door.

"I don't like that, but go on, Daddy Drum!" cried Julius, and the little old man said 'good-night,' and went down the stair.

"Now for work!" cried Felix as he followed him, and a few moments later he let himself out of the house without noise, and was once more the nocturnal shadower of Daddy Drum.

CHAPTER XIV.

TOMMY TODD VANISHES.

"WENT to see Felix Fox, did he?" cried Julius when he found himself alone after Daddy Drum's departure. "I wonder if I can put my hands on the young imp?"

The little spy dogged by the boy spotter was hardly a block away ere Julius was on the street and walking rapidly.

"He's as slippery as an eel! I know the fellow—I knew him too well to take him all the way with me when I had the young hawk in the cab. If he doesn't own up to the truth, or if he attempts to sneak out of his villainy, I'll show him that the Palace can keep a dark secret."

Not long afterward Julius dodged into the Mott street tenement, and bounded up the creaky stair.

He was heard by a boy who was about to jump into a narrow bed, though the hour was late, past midnight.

The next moment the listening youth was startled by a knock at the door and when he opened it he stood face to face with Julius.

The New York gentleman-tough had smoothed his face and there was no sign of rage in the eyes that regarded Tommy Todd half undressed in the light of his lamp.

"Just going to turn in, eh, Tommy?" ejaculated Julius.

"Was about ter," answered the boy.

Julius took a step forward and stopped. He was within touching distance of his young accomplice.

"What did you discover to-night?" he asked.

"Nothin'."

"You were on the Bowery."

"If Oh, yes; I recollect I was there."

"So I thought," replied Julius with a faint smile. "You were in the hawk's nest."

"Yes, sir."

Tommy now saw that the man before him knew what he was talking about.

"Do you often visit Felix Fox?" continued Julius.

The king of the gamins gave a violent start and could hardly suppress a cry.

"I—visit—Felix?" he exclaimed. "Come, Julius; what are you driving at?"

"You ought to know," was the answer, and before Tommy could move, the hand of his master descended upon his shoulder and remained there.

"I guess you've played Judas! You've sold me out!"

Tommy Todd grew white.

"What did he pay you?" Julius went on.

"When did you lose your head?" cried the boy. "Sold you out, have I? Do you think I'd be here going quietly to bed if I had sold you to Felix Fox, the Bowery Shadow? I guess I'm no fool, Julius. Who's been giving you this game?"

The tough looked nonplused, but when he saw Tommy's brazen manner, he began to suspect that he had struck the boy a very hard blow, and that in a vulnerable part.

"I know more than you think," he said, and his grip seemed to tighten on the boy's shoulder. "You don't want to train with Julius any longer. You haven't got over the fight on the street."

"That is so, Julius. You left me there, left me to have it out with the Bowery pair. Was that fair?"

"And because I did so, you turn traitor do you?"

Tommy colored.

"No, not that!" he cried, and despite Julius's grip he jerked loose and retreated almost to the wall where his coat was hanging on a nail.

"I allow no man to apply an epithet like that to me!"

"Well, I do, and I guess I'm a man!" flashed Julius, and the next moment he cleared with a bound the space between himself and the boy, and arrested Tommy's hand as it went upward toward the garment.

"Don't you know that I'm no infant?" he went on, clutching the boy's wrist as he looked down into his face and held him at arm's

length. "Remember that I am Julius, the man who lifted you a notch in the scale of humanity."

"I was gamin when you found me, and I'm gamin yet!" was the response, as eye met eye. "I haven't been elevated by my contact with you; I guess I've dropped a notch, if anything."

Julius fairly frothed; the words of the boy had cut like a double-edged sword.

"No insolence!" he hissed, shaking Tommy up as if he would jumble his bones together. "I am thoroughly convinced that you gave me away to Felix Fox."

"Think so if you want to," cried Tommy through set teeth. "You're bound to make a traitor out of me whether or no. You wouldn't accept the truth if I swore to it. What do you generally do with traitors, Julius?"

A smile was at the boy's lips as he spoke.

"I'll show you in a few moments."

The youngster could not break from Julius else he would have done so and bounded away, for the gentleman-tough's look told him that evil was at hand.

All at once Julius raised his disengaged hand, and before Tommy could realize what was coming, fingers closed at his throat and a half-shriek was forced from him as he was lifted from the floor.

"What do I do with traitors? I let 'em go of course!" laughed Julius.

There was no reply for the fingers prevented Tommy from articulating a single word, and when Julius dragged the boy to the door he was already growing black in the face.

Five minutes later Julius looked into Tommy's room from the hall and then crossed the threshold.

Going to the boy's coat he took it from the nail and stuffed it with a few other things into an old valise which lay in one corner.

"Be the loikes av me, Mr. Julius, phat became o' the corpse av Nanny?" suddenly asked a strong Hibernian voice at the door, and Julius turned with a start to see Mother Fitz who had just appeared. "Ye know the choild was hit by a runaway boss, an' kilt dead instantly. Phat did they do wid the corpse, I'm askin'?"

"I presume they put it under ground, Mother Fitz."

"Poor choild! poor choild!" cried the Amazon, who, despite her rough exterior, had a kind heart. "Has Tommy removed that ye'r packin' a few duds o' his'n?"

"Tommy has changed quarters for the present."

"An' won't he come to the Palace any more?"

"I hope so."

"There's a good deal in the b'ye, a good deal thet's kind," added Mother Fitz. "I'm sorry for Nanny, Mr. Julius. For the motherless choild to meet her death on the strate loike that! Good-night. I may have disturbed ye, but I couldn't help droppin' in." And the burly figure of Mother Fitz waddled off much to Julius's satisfaction at that particular time.

He was interrupted no further, and when he had finished packing the valise, he went off down the front way and out into the street, taking Tommy's clothes with him.

"They wake up the wrong man when they rouse me," he said in no good humor. "I would bet my head that Tommy Todd gave the whole scheme away to Felix Fox. I shall now have the Bowery fox after me in earnest, but I guess Daddy Drum and I can match him."

Nobody followed Julius this time.

All at once he dodged into an alley and passed through to another street. When he came out the valise was missing. Tommy Todd's garments had been left somewhere by the city villain.

"Well, Nathan, is every thing right now?" he asked of a man who shortly after admitted him to a certain house into which we have followed him before.

"He's been playin' high jinks," was the answer.

"Since I left, of course?"

"Since you went away."

"What did he do?"

"In the first place, he threw one of the big books through the window, and it fell into the court."

"The Old Harry!" ejaculated Julius.

"Then he tried to batter the door down with a table-leg. He raised a fearful racket."

"Did anybody hear it?"

"I don't see how they could help it, situated as we are."

Julius, who was quite pale, was nervous and out of sorts.

"You know what you were to do under such

circumstances, Nathan," he said at length. "I gave you orders some time ago."

"That's what I was coming to," the man said, grimly. "You know, sir, that you told me to pull a string, or a stout cord, rather, if he got too loud—"

"Yes, yes, I told you that, and I wanted it done, too!" broke in Julius.

"I pulled the cord—pulled it with all my might."

"Well?"

"There was a crash, not very loud from here, of course, but a crash nevertheless."

"And it worked admirably?"

"I'm—afraid—not—sir."

"How's that?" and Julius caught Nathan's arm and leaned forward.

"After the pull I went up-stairs to look after the results, and I found—"

"You found what?"

"I should have said that I did not find the boy."

Julius was spellbound.

He had not a vestige of color in his cheeks, and his breaths were a series of gasps.

"Not—in—the—old—room—Nathan?" he asked.

"Not there."

The next moment Julius bounded away and mounted the steps with wonderful alertness.

He dashed excitedly into the room where he had left Clarence Lacey, the Philadelphia boy, but Clarence was not there.

"Where is he?" he exclaimed. "It can't be that he was not caught by the trap. Hal! there is the window broken by the book he tossed through it. What if he followed the book? Fudge! he would have been dashed to death."

And Julius drew back from the window, and threw another mad and disappointed look about the room.

The Philadelphia boy had disappeared, but whither?

The question was too much for Julius.

CHAPTER XV.

FELIX TO THE RESCUE.

DADDY DRUM, followed by Felix, moved rapidly toward that portion of the city which had become Florus Falcon's prison.

The little fellow was nimble-footed in spite of his years. Tommy Todd, with all his agility, was barely a match for him.

Felix, who had failed to catch the words of Julius which gave Daddy Drum the directions he was expected to follow, could not afford to lose sight of his unwilling guide for a minute.

He was well acquainted with that portion of the city through which he was being led, and when the gentleman tough's messenger turned into a certain street, he felt that the chase was about to end.

Daddy disappeared in an alley-like street which had no gas-lights, but for all this the Bowery detective saw him at the door of a house to which he sought admission.

"Run down, my old fox!" exclaimed Felix, when the figure of Daddy Drum had vanished beyond the threshold. "So here is where Blanche the purse-lifter lives? And Florus is here too, eh? Thanks, Mr. Drum. You have performed a valuable service to-night, but Julius will never place a high estimate on it."

Felix inspected the house as well as he was able in the poor light he had to work in.

It thrilled him to think that Florus was there, watched by a jailer like Blanche could be when she tried. He knew that Daddy Drum was the bearer of a terrible message from Julius to the woman. It meant the sudden snuffing out of his friend's life, for Julius was desperate, and Blanche a tigress with sharp claws beneath the velvet.

"No time is to be lost," thought the boy spotter. "By this time Daddy Drum has found Blanche, and the message has been delivered. I must get inside. It is now or never!"

Alongside the house ran a narrow passage which separated it from its neighbor. It was not gated, and beyond the pavement the darkness of a cavern reigned.

Felix went boldly into the passage.

He knew the houses of New York well enough to believe that he would find a small space about the back part of the building, and he was not disappointed.

He did not know how many people besides Blanche inhabited the place. There might be a dozen.

But the young sleuth was not to be daunted by uncertainties of this nature.

In the yard grew a tree that leaned over the roof of the back structure, and where the shin-

gles joined the main house Felix noticed a small window without shutters.

"I'll try the tree," murmured the boy. "That route looks the most encouraging of any I see," and a moment later he caught the lower limbs and dextrously swung himself upon the roof.

He rested a minute and then crawled toward the window. Nothing risked, nothing gained was the theory that sent the young shadow forward.

In a little while Felix had his hand on the sash, and a moment's work proved that it could be raised.

This was encouraging.

When the sash had been raised sufficiently to admit his body, Felix propped it up with a loose shingle and drew his shoes.

Beyond the window darkness and silence reigned.

Felix threw one leg inside, but there he stopped, for he had heard a voice.

"You mustn't touch him, I say," were the words that assailed the young detective's ears.

"I won't, Blanche."

"But I know your temper, and your fingers, too, for that matter."

"Very well. If you can't trust me, you can let it alone. But if you don't carry out the orders I brought, you'll hear another sentence in court, and that before long."

"I'm going to obey. The young bird whistled a sweet lay to me awhile back. He told a pretty story about a young boy who had been decoyed to New York by Julius, and he tried powerful hard to work on my sympathy, but the scheme was no good. I tell you, Daddy Drum, if there's anything I'm poor in it's sympathy. Why should I possess any? The world never gave me a bit, and I would be a fool to parcel a lot of it out to those who beg for the same. No, sir, Daddy Drum. I'm the person I used to be; I am Blanche, and I'll prove it to Julius by my work."

Felix listening at the window and half-way in the house did not miss a syllable of this conversation.

He had not arrived a moment too soon.

"Mebbe he'll show fight," said Daddy Drum's voice after a brief silence.

"What if he does?" replied Blanche, with a cold, cruel laugh. "I guess I'm able to deal with the fly that has come to the net. I didn't want Julius to fetch him here, but since he has, I am not going to play false."

The voices came up from below, and after the last word Felix heard a movement of feet and the turn of a door-knob.

Daddy Drum had delivered his message, and was about to go.

"It all depends on you, Blanche," resumed the little spy. "The young sleuth up-stairs knows too much about the game we have in hand. Before the week is out there'll be one hundred thousand to divide, and your share won't be a miserly one, you may depend on it. Ah! good-night now. Don't let your heart fail you."

Blanche's responsive laugh floated up to Felix, who had dropped to the floor beneath the window with the caution of a cat, and in a moment the door let Daddy Drum into the narrow street.

Felix did not stir for some minutes.

He heard Blanche shut the front door and turn back toward that part of the house where Daddy Drum had startled her.

He was unacquainted with the place, but felt confident that he could find his companion's prison if the woman below would not interrupt him.

Here was the uncertainty.

Blanche was liable to appear on the scene without warning, and at any moment, and he knew that a collision with her would not be child's play.

Felix went to work.

He lowered the window, lest a draught from without should betray his presence to Blanche. Then he crept from door to door as he found them, and tried each with as much caution as was possible.

The third one did not open at the turn of the knob.

Again Felix tried it, but with the same results.

All at once the boy spotter heard a footstep beyond the door.

He put his ear to the key-hole.

The noise approached the portal, and the young shadow heard it stop there.

He held his breath for a moment, and then spoke a name in a whisper:

"Florus?"

The answer thrilled him.

"Felix!"

The youth inside seemed to have guessed the meaning of the cautiously turned knob.

"You want to look out for my jailer," continued Florus. "It is Blanche, the bird from Sing Sing. She is in the clutches of Julius, as of old. The woman can't be made to betray him."

Felix straightened at the door as Florus concluded, for a certain sound falling upon his ears had told that he was not the only person on the alert in the old house.

"Silence," he whispered at the keyhole, and then drew back along the wall, and waited and watched.

A minute later he saw the figure of Blanche as it was revealed by the small lamp she carried in her hand.

She did not see Felix as she came forward and dodged into one of the rooms whose door had been tried.

The young night ferret of Gotham waited several minutes for Blanche's reappearance, but she did not favor him.

"I'll surprise the tigress," smiled Felix, moving toward the room. "She does not look for me, and Daddy Drum is not here to effect a rescue."

Blanche had left the door ajar, and Felix on approaching it beheld her figure bending over a trunk opened on the floor.

Her back was toward the entrance, and she did not see the young New Yorker who glided across the carpet with something in his hand.

All at once Felix spoke.

"Blanche?"

The woman fell back and then started up with a quick cry.

"Got out, did you?" she exclaimed. "No! I am mistaken. It is the other one!"

"It is Felix Fox," answered the youth with a smile. "You ought to know me, Blanche."

"I know too much of you. What do you want?"

"I want you to open a certain door for me."

"I won't!"

"Just as you like," and Felix's voice was calm. "I will proceed to have it opened against your will, and your name may appear in the city papers to-morrow."

Blanche started and lost color.

"I am not here to parley," continued the youth. "I give you one minute, Blanche. If you want to go back to Sing Sing as the accomplice of one of the greatest rogues in New York, refuse to unlock the door that holds Florus Falcon a prisoner."

The woman looked at Felix several moments without speaking.

"Come!" she cried, jerking a key from her pocket and striding toward the door. "You've got the upper hand to-night, Felix Fox, and I accept the situation."

CHAPTER XVI.

JULIUS PICKS UP A PRIZE.

EARLY the next day Julius was back at the house in the alley.

Nathan met him at the door.

"Any news yet, Nathan?" asked Julius, anxiously.

The man shook his head.

"I am puzzled," continued the tiger sport. "The boy has disappeared as effectually as though the earth had swallowed him. He was surely there when you pulled the cord?"

"Didn't I hear his racket? I have been up to the room myself. I've even searched the whole house, but he is gone, as you say."

Julius said nothing for a moment.

The mysterious disappearance of Clarence Lacey, his victim, was unaccountable.

Besides, it was suggestive of danger, and he did not like it.

What if the boy should alarm the police?

"If he was in the room when the trap was sprung I can't see how he got away," suddenly resumed Julius aloud.

"You don't blame me, do you?" and Nathan's eyes lit up with a flash of resentment as he measured the sport from head to foot.

"No, Nathan," was the prompt reply. "I can blame no one but myself. I held the bird too long. But the game is not yet lost. The boy may be back here by midnight."

"He won't come of his own accord," grinned Nathan.

"I should say not."

Five minutes later Julius was on the street with his wits about him, and ready to pounce upon Clarence Lacey should his eyes catch sight of him.

"What yer looking for?" asked a voice at his

side, and the city sport looked down into the face of Daddy Drum.

"The very man I want," thought Julius.

He made no answer but led the little old fellow to a well-concealed seat in the small park near which the opportune meeting had taken place.

"Well, what did you do last night?" asked Julius.

"Carried out your orders."

"Good! And Blanche?—what did she say?"

"She promised to take care of the pigeon in the net."

"Good again. Now, Mr. Drum, I have some work for your wits. We've lost the Philadelphia bird."

Daddy Drum started, but did not cry out. His looks expressed his astonishment.

"He got out last night. Don't ask me how for I don't know. Of course we can play the game through without him—"

"I don't see how."

"Maybe you do not. Well, by crushing the young Bowery ferrets we destroy the Quaker City boy's power to defeat us. Without help he can do nothing. With Felix Fox and his partner to champion his cause, he could give us a peck of trouble. One of the pair is finished, for Blanche has done her duty."

"She said she would."

"And she never fails!" exclaimed Julius, confidently. "Now, Mr. Drum, I want you to look out for the lost bird. I will attend to the remaining ferret. Clarence Lacey will try to get back to Philadelphia, but he cannot do this without money, and he has none. I think he will haunt the Jersey City depot, and you had best go thither."

"If I find him, what?"

"Trap him! I leave it all to your cunning, Daddy Drum."

"Where is Tommy?"

"You don't want Tommy's assistance in a case of this kind," replied Julius, quickly. "He is likely to volunteer the wrong advice when you don't want it. Let the king of gamins go, and attend to the bird-catching by yourself."

"I recollect now that Tommy was to visit the hospital to-day, and try to get a look at Nan. He wants to know if she told Florus Falcon anything, how badly she is hurt, and all that. We'll let Tommy work that lay, eh, Julius?"

"Yes," answered the tiger-sport, with a peculiar smile, the meaning of which Daddy Drum did not interpret. "Now, you do your work, and I'll attend to mine."

As the two worthies walked away, a boy watched them with great eagerness.

"I wonder if they are looking for me?" he exclaimed. "That tall one is Julius, the infamous rascal who is the cause of all my suffering. He is the wretch who lured me from home in order to carry out a scheme of his own. He caused father's death if what he told me is true. But what can I do alone against him and his partners in crime? I am friendless here. My story would be laughed at by the police, and Julius and his accomplices will swear me to ruin. I must go back home if I can get there. I must bide my time which will surely come. That little man with Julius I have never seen before, but he is in the plot against me. I would give the hundred thousand, if it is coming to me, to fell the whole gang at one blow."

While he talked thus to himself, Clarence Lacey followed Julius and Daddy Drum, keeping them in sight without great difficulty.

He had not been near enough to hear the conversation which had passed between the pair; but he was sure that a part of it related to his escape.

After awhile the rascals separated, and Clarence, after a moment's reflection, resolved to keep track of Julius.

He was anxious to know where the city sport lodged in case he concluded to put the matter into the hands of the New York police.

Julius, however, did not lead Clarence to his favorite quarters, but went to Mott street, where he darted into the old house and vanished.

"That is the house I was conducted to when I first fell into the snare!" exclaimed the Quaker City boy. "I wonder if Julius goes to find Tommy Todd who met me at the depot and brought me hither? I owe you one, Tommy, for you are as deep in the villainous scheme as the rest."

Clarence resolved to watch for the city sport's reappearance, and in order to do so he stationed himself in the vicinity and began.

Julius went straight to the little room formerly occupied by Tommy Todd.

What was he after? Did he expect to find

the gamin there after the night visit he had recently made to the room?

He found the door unlocked, and the light that came in at the window showed him that Tommy had not been back since he (Julius) had carried off a valise packed with his garments.

"Ah! ye'r' back, Mister Julius!" exclaimed the well-known voice of Mother Fitz, as Julius made his appearance in the hall after a brief sojourn in Tommy's room. "And how is Mister Todd comin' on?"

"Oh, he is doing well," replied the sport.

"Niver comin' back to the old house any more I don't know?"

"May be not, Mrs. Fitz."

"Tell him, then, that he'd better not," and the giantess leaned toward Julius with a flash in her eye.

"Why not?"

"Niver moind why, Julius. Don't I know that if there had been no Tommy Todd, Nan would niver have been kilt by the runaway horse? There was good blood in that chold—as good as there is anywhere in New York. She didn't like you any too well, Mister Julius, but phat's the use o' talkin' over these things now? You tell Tommy Todd that we can spare his carkiss here, an' bad luck to the young spalpeen for the way he treated Nan!"

Julius did not waste words with Mother Fitz, but left the house with a smile at his lips, and walked rapidly away.

He was at once seen by Clarence Lacey who started after him, and as Julius seemed in a hurry to reach a certain spot, the boy kept as close at his heels as the chase would permit.

All at once Julius turned back as if a sudden thought had altered his plans.

Clarence saw the change but too late to get out of the city tiger's way.

He drew back quickly toward the nearest building.

Maybe Julius would not see him.

"Heaven help me to escape the villain!" mentally exclaimed the Quaker City boy as he watched Julius. "Ah! he does not see me. Another second and he will be past. Then—"

The rest of the sentence died on his lips.

Julius had caught sight of him, and they were looking into each other's eyes!

It was mutual recognition. Clarence felt a cold thrill sweep through his body, and his feet seemed to be riveted to the sidewalk.

"Ha! I've found you, have I?" burst from the sport's throat as he came toward Clarence with triumph blazing up in his eyes, and his fingers itching to clutch his victim again. "You will go with me, my boy," and one of his hands descended upon the young Philadelphian's shoulder and fastened there like the talons of an eagle.

Clarence instinctively drew back.

"Not a word out of you!" continued Julius, noticing the swift look the boy sent up and down the street. "The police of New York won't help you as against me. Come along! You don't seem to care for the fortune I'm getting for you. You're a pretty chicken!"

And Clarence found himself at Julius's side walking down the street with the villain's grip at his arm, and his keen eyes fastened upon him.

"Keep them in sight!" muttered one of two well built boys who had witnessed the arrest. "Julius, the New York tiger, has caught a runaway lamb, and a thousand to one that it is the Philadelphia boy. We did not follow Julius for nothing, Florus. If we lose him now, we may lose the game."

"And if he sees us the result may be the same."

"Just so," was the response, and the Bowery pair kept cautiously after their old quarry.

CHAPTER XVII.

BACK IN THE CAGE.

JULIUS felt elated over the unexpected success that had fallen to his lot.

Not for a moment did his grip on Clarence Lacey's arm relax, and he kept on after the manner of a young policeman with his first capture in tow.

Of course he did not know that Felix Fox and Florus Falcon were not far behind him. If such a thought had entered his head, he would have been on his guard, and the young detectives would not have escaped unnoticed.

Julius conducted his prisoner to his favorite lodgings, but not with any intention of making the place the boy's permanent prison.

As he crossed the threshold of his private

room a figure rose before him, and he stood face to face with Blanche.

The woman was about to speak when she noticed Clarence, and then she held her tongue.

All at once Julius turned away and led the boy toward a wardrobe at one side of the room. Opening the door he thrust his prisoner inside and when Clarence recovered his thoughts the door was shut and locked.

"There's more than one way getting rid of a troublesome customer," laughed Julius as he came toward Blanche. "I caught that bird on the street awhile ago, and he was just the bird I wanted, too. Deuced lucky, wasn't it?"

"I wish you had caught the young Bowery rat who balked me last night," answered Blanche.

Julius started.

"Who balked you?" he echoed.

"Why, you don't mean that you failed to carry out my orders?"

"I failed and because I was taken unawares by the shrewdest boy in New York!"

"Felix Fox?"

"Felix Fox! I would give my hope of paradise to get the upper hand of the young rascal!" exclaimed Blanche. "I was about to carry out your commands when he came upon the scene, and spoiled the whole game."

"By liberating your prisoner?"

"Yes."

The countenance that Julius displayed at this moment was one full of deep chagrin and disappointment.

"You must not blame me, Julius," suddenly resumed the woman.

"I don't, Blanche. You were overpowered last night, I know you were. But why did you not come sooner?"

"I was here before, but you were not in. I have been waiting an hour for you."

"Well, I'll dispose of the bird in the hand before I go for the one in the bush," returned Julius, and Blanche noticed that he spoke the last words through his teeth.

The woman leaned forward and glanced at the wardrobe, as she continued in low tones.

"Is that the boy Florus Falcon told me about?" she asked.

"What did he tell you?"

"He talked about a young Philadelphian who had been decoyed from home. I finally drew from him that the young person's name was Lacey, and you know, Julius, how I hate that name. You have the Quaker City boy safe, I see. Well, I hope you will hold him."

"There's a cool hundred thousand in the game, Blanche, and we want no failure," laughed the tiger-sport. "Yes, that is the boy; but the secret is safe with you because there is Lacey blood in his veins, eh, my girl?"

"Safe forever!" cried Blanche. "What can I do, Julius?"

A conversation in lower tones followed, and after awhile Julius and the Philadelphia boy reappeared on the sidewalk below.

Blanche was not far away.

"My old jailer, Felix," whispered one of the young detectives on guard, when he caught sight of the woman. "Julius knows that I am at large, and he will prepare for the tug-of-war. Blanche got with him as soon as possible, and the story of the rescue has been well told by her glib tongue. Now, there they go. Julius is on the watch already, and the Quaker City bird feels that he is in the clutches of a merciless hawk. What shall it be?—a trip-up on the street?"

"No. A play of that kind might alarm Daddy Drum and Tommy Todd, whom we do not want to lose. We can shadow Julius to the boy's prison, and then for a rescue if advisable."

"All right."

The sport led the two boys a good long chase, which ended at last in an alley, and at the door of a tall house that rose far above its immediate neighbors.

They saw Clarence Lacey glance up at it in a manner that spoke louder than words.

It was his old prison, and the boy knew it.

Before this Blanche had left Julius, and the young detectives had let her go.

The tiger-sport and his prisoner were more important than the woman.

Julius suddenly confronted Nathan, his accomplice beyond the threshold of the tall house.

"What did I tell you, Nathan?" he laughed, glancing triumphantly at Clarence. "I said I'd catch the bird before night, and here he is. Now, we'll try the old game over. What do you think now, boy?"

"I am in your power," answered Clarence, looking Julius boldly in the eye. "In all my life I never heard of such villainy before."

"Villainy? By Jupiter! he isn't choice with words when he wants 'em!" exclaimed Nathan.

Julius smiled.

"You may carry your scheme out, but vengeance will come," the boy went on. "The law will get you yet, Julius, and the infamous game you are now playing will cost you more than you think. Go ahead with it. I believe I am the real and not the adopted son of Truman Lacey. I have heard him talk of Alice Bledsoe whose child you say I am. I don't care what kind of proof you may have. I am Truman Lacey's son, and the hundred thousand was never intended for me. Never, sir."

"We'll see, boy!" replied Julius. "There are some things you don't know yet. Do you think I'd play a game like this unless I knew what's what? Not Alice Bledsoe's son, eh? I'll take all the doubts my young pigeon with the golden feathers. Here, Nathan; take charge of the prize. No failure the next time. See that the cage doesn't let the bird out again."

The next moment Clarence Lacey was transferred to Nathan's clutch, and Julius stepped back and contemplated his victory with gleaming eyes.

Five minutes afterward the Philadelphia boy found himself in a dark room much smaller than the one from which he had previously escaped.

The only article of furniture in the place was a low lounge upon which he threw himself for rest and reflection, for he needed both.

"Once more in the tiger's claws," he exclaimed. "I had a breathing spell, but it did not profit me much. Perhaps I should have reported to the police at once, or, better still, have tried to get to Philadelphia. Julius will take care that I do not get out the second time; but am I to stay here while he gains the day? There must be something in the hundred thousand dollar scheme, and I am in some manner connected with it. It is very strange."

Long before this, silence had settled down in the new prison.

The youth wondered what had become of Julius, and then he thought of Tommy Todd, the cunning young fox who had helped to inveigle him into the snare.

The city sport's words to Nathan assured him that a *coup* of some kind was to be played, but how or when he did not know.

His prison was so strong that he had nothing to do but sit down and wait.

As for Julius, he went from the house to the ferry.

He had sent Daddy Drum across the river to the depot for Clarence, and he now wanted to call the spy off as the service was not needed.

In the depot he came suddenly upon the little old fellow who was on the lookout. Daddy Drum started at sight of Julius, and a smile overspread his parchment-like features when he heard of Clarence's arrest.

It disappeared the moment Blanche's failure was mentioned.

"See here, Julius," exclaimed Daddy Drum, putting on an air of dignity as he drew back and looked at the tiger-sport.

"I don't want to inspect the interior of Sing Sing as the guest of the state any more than you do. Great Scott! I shiver when I think that I might do so if the game goes wrong because of the Bowery foxes. We've got to strike, Julius! We must deliver a blow that will silence the young sleuths. I move that we consult with Tommy who gets some cunning ideas into his noggin. Where will we be likely to find Tommy Todd, think you, Julius?"

"Let Tommy go. If you and I, Daddy Drum can't match the boy Vidocqs of Gotham I'll sell my head for a puff-ball. Come! back to New York, and then organization for swift and final victory!"

Daddy Drum and Julius hurried to the boat which was about to leave, and a minute later were on the water.

"I have news that Nan is going to get well," whispered the sport.

Daddy Drum frowned.

"You don't like that, I see?" continued Julius, noticing the frown.

"No, I don't," blurted the spy. "But I'll be around the day she gets out of the hospital!" he added under his breath. "I hated her mother before her!"

By this time the boat was gliding into its place on the New York side, and the two pards landed with eyes on the alert.

"Hello! there's Tommy now!" suddenly exclaimed Daddy Drum.

Julius started like one shot, and turned with a quick cry.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAUGHT AND LOST.

"WHERE is he?" exclaimed the tiger-sport.

"Ah! I don't see him now," was the answer.

Julius had lost color, and his face was quite pale.

"Are you certain you saw him?" he asked, in an unnatural voice, as he leaned toward Daddy Drum.

"I—I don't know, but I think I did," replied Daddy, doubtfully. "He was right over yonder, but it's a fact that he isn't there now. Confound Tommy! he's as quick as a cat when he wants to be. But I don't see why he should want to run away from us."

Julius said nothing, but his face had an expression which spoke volumes if Daddy Drum could only have read it aright.

A few moments later the two companions left the ferry-house, and Julius consulted his watch on the sidewalk beyond.

"Come to my old quarters about two hours from now," said Julius, while the little man looked up into his face while he waited for orders. "Meanwhile, keep your eyes and ears open. If you get sight of Tommy, which I hardly think you will, keep him under shadow, but don't let him know it."

"I wonder what's up between Tommy and the boss?" muttered Mr. Drum as he moved away, while Julius, anxious to reach a certain place as quickly as possible, took a cab and was whisked up-town.

The tiger-sport gave himself no rest till he reached a house on the east side of the city and near the river.

It was some distance from the ferry.

Taking a key from his pocket, he unlocked the front door and went in.

Of course he took care to shut the door behind him; not only this, but he locked it.

Julius groped down a dark hall and found another door.

This was locked, like the front one had been.

"I guess Daddy Drum was mistaken, for I find the doors locked," observed Julius, in undertones, as he opened the last door and put his foot on the first of a flight of stairs which led down into the darkness.

In a little while he was in a place that had a damp smell like a moldy cellar.

Then he struck a match and leaned forward with burning eagerness while the little flame increased above his hand.

"Heavens! he is not here!" he suddenly exclaimed. "In the name of Jupiter, how did the street weasel get out?"

Julius was in an empty cellar, as his match plainly showed him.

Tommy Todd was gone.

For several minutes the city schemer stood spellbound in the damp place.

"Why didn't I clip his wings when I brought him here?" he exclaimed, in a rage. "I had him in my hands, and I knew he was playing double. But I thought he was safe in this place. I had a right to think so. Now, what will the young Judas do? He will be afraid to go to the police, for he is too well known by them. I rather think he will keep out of my way, for he knows I'm not to be trifled with. Be careful, Mr. Todd. You don't want to fool with your old master."

As there was nothing to be gained by a stay in the cellar, Julius drew back and went away.

The boy he had nabbed in the Mott street house had given him the slip, and the chances were, although Julius hated to confess it, that he would prove dangerous.

"I guess you didn't find the bird you're looking for, Julius," ejaculated a boy, who from a safe distance saw the city villain emerge from the old house. "I never saw the cage that could hold Tommy Todd very long. Now, Mr. Julius, I am at liberty to block your game for the hundred thousand. I don't want to go up the river with you, as you certainly will if Felix Fox and his pard get you dead to rights." It need not be said here that the speaker was the redoubtable Tommy Todd himself, nor that Daddy Drum had really seen him at the ferry.

Julius left the place somewhat ill at ease, and was watched by the gamin king who was careful to keep out of sight.

Tommy did not want to fall back into the clutches of his old employer. He had already had enough of his ways.

The sport went straight to the house occupied by Blanche.

"What do you know?" he asked the woman, as he faced her in one of the little rooms.

"Not much, Julius."

"Have you discovered nothing since we parted?"

"But very little."

"Give me that little."

A singular smile came to the woman's face while she looked at Julius.

"I have discovered that you can't win," she said.

Julius gave a quick start and then broke out into a derisive laugh.

"When did you get faint-hearted, Blanche?" he exclaimed. "Come! you can't afford to desert me now. One more stroke and the prize is won."

"With the young foxes of the Bowery at large?"

"Yes!" said Julius through set teeth, and then he touched the woman's wrist with fingers that instantly closed there. "Maybe you've got the old Sing Sing fright on you again. I never get it, but you do, ha, ha!"

Blanche uttered a cry and broke from his grasp.

"I don't want to go back there!" she exclaimed. "I believe there's a better future than that for me."

"You do, eh?" cried Julius, springing up and striding toward the woman, his eyes full of fire. "Are you going to give me away to the hounds of the law?"

"No! no! not that," was the answer. "I am no traitress, Julius."

"You might as well be. You will turn on me like Tommy Todd has done. I know you women. The shadow of a prison door makes you tremble like a child. Very well! when I have the fortune and you are in the gutters of New York, I'll laugh at the cowardice you displayed on the eve of success. I believe you let the bird loose."

In an instant the woman seemed to be transformed into a fury, but all at once she cooled down by a great effort, and when she spoke again her voice was strangely calm.

"Think as you will," she went on. "I am out of the game, Julius, but you will never find me playing the role of traitress."

The tiger-sport looked at her a few seconds without speaking, and then turned and walked away.

"If they all turn against me there will be no division of the spoil," he laughed to himself as he walked from the house watched by Blanche until he was out of sight. "Daddy Drum and I will prove the equals of the boy hunters of the Bowery. Daddy is worth his weight in gold. He is more than a match for Tommy Todd, if that gutter-snipe attempts any sharp plays, and I—well, I guess I've never been balked yet."

Not long afterward Julius appeared at the door of the house in the alley where, as we know, he left Clarence Lacey after his recapture in the hands of Nathan, the janitor.

A strange silence pervaded the place, although it was nearly mid-day.

Julius gave several peculiar raps on the door.

After the third one the portal was opened, and the city sport glided in.

"Back I am, Nathan," he exclaimed, turning in the dark hall. "You want to get me the papers in the old trunk, and then I'll listen to your report. Of course the Philadelphia bird is done for, and I am ready to drop the hammer on the heads of the street weasels. What is the matter, Nathan? Have you lost your tongue?"

By this time Julius had reached the end of the corridor, and the following moment a door opened.

"Walk in, Julius," said a voice, and two figures rose before the New York sharp, and he found himself looking into the muzzles of a brace of revolvers.

"Treason!" cried Julius, wheeling upon the person who had accompanied him from the front door.

"No, not treason," continued the voice he had just heard, which was that of Felix Fox. "Nathan was taken unawares and overpowered. You will see that he is gagged, and has the use of but one arm. Take your defeat like a man, Julius. The game has gone against you."

There was no reply.

Before the thunderstruck sport stood the boy sleuths of the Bowery, and in the same room Julius saw the triumphant face of Clarence Lacey, the Quaker City victim.

"The game is not out!" suddenly flashed the tiger-sport. "I have never yet been beaten by a brace of sucking weasels, and I will never be!"

The next instant he whirled with the quickness of a cat, and plunged down the hallway toward the door.

It was the dash of a desperate man for safety, and so sudden was it that the young detectives were thrown off their guard.

The next moment, however, they sprung after the quarry, but all at once the door opened and shut, and Julius was gone!

CHAPTER XIX.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

"BETTER luck next time!" rung out the voice of Clarence Lacey, as the pursuers reached the door empty-handed, for Julius had really effected his escape by the sudden flight he had made.

"The game is not yet lost," was Felix's rejoinder, and the next instant he and Florus had crossed the threshold and were in the alley.

Julius had disappeared, but this fact did not deter the young detectives from flying toward the street.

"There's many a slip, my young foxes," chuckled the Gotham sport, when he found himself on the pavement. "If I don't get even for this clever *coup* of yours, you may use my head for a football. You are the outwitted party at this stage of the proceedings, not I. Julius is Julius wherever you find him!"

The tiger-sport was elated over his sudden change of fortune, and while he hurried away, dodging here and there among the pedestrians, he kept his eyes open for pursuers.

"What means this?" suddenly exclaimed a voice at Julius's side, and he shrunk back as a hand touched his arm.

"Go away—leave me! I don't want you here now, Daddy Drum," cried the sport, recognizing the person who had addressed him.

"Something's gone wrong, strikes me."

"Wrong? It went right at the last moment. Go back and keep your eyes open! The young foxes had me in a trap, but I wouldn't stay caught. If you see them throw them off the scent, some way—I don't care how."

Daddy Drum turned back.

The hastily-spoken words of Julius had told him that a catastrophe had happened. He knew the case was desperate.

Sharp-eyed and cunning was Daddy Drum. In his somewhat shriveled frame was the strength of a lion, and he seemed to call it to his aid as he went back, his eyes snapping wickedly.

All at once he stopped.

"Julius was right," he exclaimed. "They are after him like a hare on a hot scent. Shall I bar the way?"

Felix and Florus had found the trail soon after the escape.

It was not their intention to let the quarry get away in broad daylight; they knew Julius and his cunning too well for that.

Daddy Drum saw the boy detectives, and as they approached the spot where he had suddenly stationed himself, he made ready for his play.

"Daddy Drum covering the retreat!" exclaimed Felix Fox, catching sight of the spy. "Push ahead, Florus. Don't lose sight of the main chance. I'll attend to the little crook."

A moment later Daddy Drum saw Felix Fox springing toward him with the courage of a young lion.

"Just what I want!" muttered the crook. "If the other would attack at the same time I'll keep 'em both employed."

But Felix halted within a few feet of him and then wheeled toward a big man whom Daddy had not seen. The gentleman was in citizen's clothes, but the moment the crook saw him he started and appeared to change color.

"This way, captain," said Felix. "Will you take charge of Mr. Drum yonder? Ah! you know him—Daddy Drum it is. Some crooked work again. I'll explain later."

The man was prompt. Before the last word had left Felix's lips he stood in front of Daddy Drum, and then the hand of the secret detective descended upon the crook's shoulder.

It was like the fall of a thunderbolt to Daddy Drum.

"Trapped!" growled the little crook who knew that he had fallen into clutches from which there was no escape, and then his look followed Felix madly as the young spotter darted off to help Florus finish the game.

Meanwhile Julius had met with misfortune in a manner totally unexpected by him.

"Ho! ho! which way, Julius?" rung out a voice which had a familiar sound, and the tiger-sport of Gotham beheld the grinning face of his late captive of the cellar, Mr. Tommy Todd.

Julius flushed.

"The cellar's empty, Julius—Tommy's gone!" continued the gamin.

"Get out of my way you young Judas!" flashed the sport, striding furiously toward Tommy.

"When you are out o' mine, Julius," was the answer.

"I'll crush you!"

Julius raised his hand, but the cool gamin did not stir.

The following moment the distance between the two lessened perceptibly, and then there was a collision.

Tommy, by a quick leap forward, prevented the tiger-sport from getting in a stunning blow, and then Julius discovered that he had an antagonist that could not be shaken off.

"The man, sir. He is the one we want. I'll take care of the boy," said a voice at Julius's elbow.

"This is Julius—Julius the gentleman crook of many names," exclaimed Tommy, suddenly disengaging himself, and the city sport saw before him a policeman who had hurried up to the strange battle which had attracted a number of people.

And near by stood Florus Falcon singling him out with leveled finger.

Julius bit his lip nearly through and submitted.

"The end of the string, Julius!" chuckled Tommy Todd.

The outcome of the opportune arrests was that Julius, the dandy sport, had his brilliant scheme of fraud exposed in open court, and a sentence for a long term followed conviction.

Daddy Drum kept his old employer company, but the evidence volunteered by Master Todd, got that worthy off without sentence, and he went away with many profuse promises of reform.

Blanche did not appear at the trial.

Her desire to lead a better life was listened to, and she was spared the humiliation of appearing in court as the accomplice of a sleek rogue like Julius.

Nan recovered from her hurts, and has since become the wife of Clarence Lacey, the Philadelphia youth, who, after all, turned out to be a Lacey by adoption only, for he was the true son of Alice Bledsoe, as Julius had by some means discovered.

In due course of time the hundred thousand dollars fell to Clarence, and his first act, after receiving the legacy, was to reward the young Bowery detectives for their valuable services, without which he would have remained the victim of the tiger-sport.

I cannot say that Tommy Todd has entirely reformed, but he is no longer watched by the Bowery pair, and since his narrow escape from Sing Sing, he has engaged in no unlawful schemes.

Of course Daddy Drum never got to vent his spite on Nan, whom he cordially hated, and the girl, whose family lineage proved to be excellent, soon forgot him and his evil eye.

Mother Fitz and old Malachi the cobbler, still occupy the Mott street "Palace," and Fox and Falcon, the young sleuths, are yet the boss boy detectives of the Empire City.

THE END.

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